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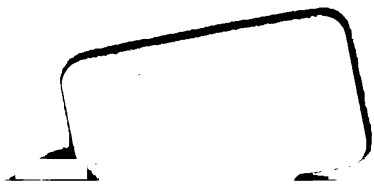

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COLLECTION

OF

BRITISH AUTHORS.

VOL. CXXIII.

MARMADUKE HERBERT

BY

THE COUNTESS OF BLESSINGTON.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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MARMADUKE HERBERT;

OR,

THE FATAL ERROR.

A NOVEL

FOUNDED ON FACT.

BY

THE COUNTESS OF BLESSINGTON.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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1847.

MARMADUKE HERBERT;

OR,

THE FATAL ERROR.

CHAPTER I.

WELL has it been observed, that truth is often stranger than fiction. The one fatal event that has destroyed my happiness, and cast its gloomy influence over a life that without it might have been peaceful, is an exemplification of this assertion. I do not seek relief by recapitulating the cause and results of my long years of misery, for well do I know the recurrence will add to, rather than diminish my chagrin, neither do I expect that my story can serve as a warning, for as the one event that led to my wretchedness was involuntary, neither example nor precept can be derived from its narration. — A motive urges me to lay bare the agonies that have long tortured my heart. I have a child, dearer to me than life itself, who, when I am laid in the grave, will peruse these pages, and comprehending much that, during my existence, was incomprehensible to her, will learn to feel for the misery of her father. Oh my child, my dear child! how often has my heart yearned to trust thee with the cause of those frequent fits of moodiness and abstraction which were uncontrollable, and which I feared must alienate thy affections, (his sole blessing,) from thy wretched parent. — But even this dread, bitter as it was, was preferable to the risk of poisoning thy young

life with a secret which might effect a baleful influence over it, so I have borne in silence suspicion and coldness, where I had been wont to meet only confidence and love. I have seen the wife of my bosom fade and die under the baleful influence exercised over her by my moodiness, yet I dared not reveal the truth to her; and I have marked the alienation of friends, produced by a conviction that madness had seized me, a conviction founded on my wayward humour, my despondency, my inexplicable changes from forced and unnatural gaiety to the deepest gloom. Oh! the misery of having a terrible secret, like a vulture preying on the vitals, yet not daring to pluck it out. To feel the dire necessity of everlastingly wearing a mask, of trying to force the jaded spirits when they refuse to own control, and of being aware that their sudden and violent changes will inevitably confirm suspicions that one would suffer death, to remove. — Oh! the wretchedness of brooding over one terrible event,

> "One fatal remembrance, one sorrow that throws
> Its bleak shade alike o'er our joys and our woes,"

through days, weeks, months, and years! To have sleep become as unbearable as waking, by being haunted with hideous dreams from which I awake to know that they are all based in one terrible truth.

But to my story. — My father, a man of ancient family, possessed of a small estate in Wales, was early left an orphan. The guardian to whom he was confided took care that he received a good education, but lived not to see its completion. Arrived at his majority, my father determined to travel, and after having explored France and Italy, visited Spain, where he became enamoured of a youthful Spanish girl, with *sangre azula** flowing through her veins, but with little worldly wealth. — Beautiful,

* Blue blood, said to belong exclusively to the ancient noblesse of Spain.

high-spirited, and impetuous, she resembled in her nature one of those fine Arabian coursers, so rare and so prized even in their own country. Acting ever upon the impulse of the moment, she waited not for reason to examine, or approve what it prompted, but so good, so noble were her feelings, that seldom did she err, and so passionate was her love for her husband, and so entire her devotion, that he sought not to correct a peculiarity, said to appertain to her nation, and which decidedly in his eyes, lent her new charms. I was born in Spain, and inhaled my infant nurture from the breast of my mother. Her delicacy of structure, and nervous temperament, ill fitted her for fulfilling this maternal function, and anxiously did her doting husband desire that she should confide it to another. But she would not listen to his pleadings, and I drew in with her milk much of the impetuous nature of my Andalusian parent, who, as she marked my precocious vivacity and impatience, would smile and say I was a true Spaniard. My father, too, was rather of a quick and fiery disposition, as most Cambrians are, and this similarity of temper, far from producing any disagreements, seemed to endear them still more to each other. My father died when I was little more than ten years old. His illness was short, and from the first seemed to baffle the skill of all the neighbouring medical men called in to his aid. Well do I remember the unceasing care, the almost breathless anxiety with which my poor mother hung over his couch, or flew to prepare, with her own hands, the remedies ordered by his physicians. But the fiat had gone forth — he expired in her arms, and for many days it was deemed that her life could not be saved. I followed as chief mourner to the grave. It seemed incomprehensible to me that the dear father, who, only a few days before, I had seen in the bloom of health and manhood, walking on the very path along which his corse was now borne, my mother leaning fondly on his supporting arm, while holding by his hand, I moved by his side, his

voice still ringing in my ears, should now be shut up in the black coffin, which I could not look at without a shudder, while the sky looked as blue, the trees and earth as green as before. — And yet with this deep sense of childish grief and terror was mingled a pride in my new black garments, the crape on my hat, and the mourning cloak that swept to my feet. I fancied myself nearer to manhood, I saw that I was an object of attention and sympathy, and when my tears for a few minutes ceased to flow, I conjured up fresh ones by dwelling on all the proofs of affection my lost father had been wont to lavish on me — so early do we prolong natural sorrow by appealing to the imagination and memory to nurse it, and so learn to become actors in the pageant of grief. While tears flowed down my cheeks, I was conscious that I was enacting my part in the ceremony, with all due propriety, that those around felt it, and that my sables produced a striking effect. Nevertheless, when we entered the church, and when the coffin was let down into the dark and dreary vault, never more to be visited by the light of day, and I heard the earth fall on it, I forgot everything, but that I should never more see the pleasant face that never looked on me but with a smile of affection, never again hear that sonorous but sweet voice, and that in the dark cavern yawning before me must my dead father remain shut out for ever from the blue sky, and green fields, from the breath of flowers, and the song of birds; and, my grief becoming desperate, I uttered a cry and rushed to throw myself on the coffin, then being let down by ropes into the vault. I remember no more until I again found myself in the open air, which revived me; and as the gentle breeze stirred my hair, and played over my brow and burning eyelids, I turned from it, recollecting that never more could it visit that dear head shut up for ever in the black coffin in the dark vault into which I had tried to precipitate myself.

My mother's grief was at once deep and passionate. She *would* not be consoled. She could not be induced to leave the

chamber, it was their nuptial one, in which my poor father died. There, giving way to the violence of her sorrow, she would pass all her hours, by turns weeping and apostrophizing the dead. She shrank from the light of day, as if, to enjoy it when *he* could see it no more, were an infidelity to the departed. Nor would she suffer anything that had been his to be removed from the room. In vain did those around her preach resignation to the will of God. They spoke to ears that heeded them not. His death could not be viewed by her impatient mind in any other light than as a terrible, an irrecoverable blow, from the effects of which she did not desire to escape; nay, she accused her own heart of hardness and ingratitude, for not breaking when the heart of her husband had ceased to beat. She would detain me for whole days in her darkened chamber, by turns embracing me, and steeping my cheeks with her burning tears, until I involuntarily betrayed some symptom of uneasiness, inevitable to childhood under such circumstances, when she would banish me from her presence, saying, "I knew not how to grieve for such a loss as I had sustained, that if I did, she would not weep alone." Then she would summon me to her, embrace me fondly, acknowledge that she had been unreasonable in expecting that a child like me could feel grief as she did, and say, "That if she consented to live, it was for me alone." Her frantic sorrow, and passionate tenderness, alike alarmed me. I might, perhaps, have shared a gentler grief, have sympathized with a less vehement affliction, but the darkened chamber, and the half-phrenzied mourner, became after some weeks objects of dread to me, the more intolerable from knowing I could not escape them. But let it not be supposed that I had ceased to regret, or remember my poor father. Never did a day, indeed I may say an hour, pass, that he was not thought of. I enjoyed no pleasure without recollecting that *he* never more could share it. I missed, him from all his accustomed haunts, and, for many months

never saw the spire of the church where he was laid, glittering in the sunbeams or tinged by the moonlight, without a tear starting to my eye; never inhaled the odour of his favourite flowers, nor heard the carol of the birds which was wont to please him, without being melted into tenderness. My melancholy was of a mild and gentle character, which, if it burst not into violent paroxysms of grief, was not likely to pass away rapidly; while that of my poor mother resembled the sorrow of Joanna of Castile for Philip the Handsome, so engrossing and so uncontrollable were its effects.

Oh! what a relief it was when I was dismissed from the dark chamber, and rushed into the sunshine, and breathed the fresh air. It seemed ungrateful to Providence, nay, almost wicked, to abandon oneself to woe, while all nature was rejoicing, and yet, as I have before stated, the view of the beautiful scenery around appealed to my feelings with a force and tenderness, that the gloomy chamber and intense sorrow of my mother could not awaken. Childhood is ever prone to seek, and to find, relief from affliction. "The sunshine of the breast" will break forth from grief, even as the sun pierces and disperses the clouds that would obscure its brightness; but this my poor mother could not comprehend, and often was I rebuked, because I felt not as she did, until I incurred the danger of becoming a hypocrite, and assuming the demonstrations of a more violent sorrow than I really experienced. A year wrought little change in her regret. It is true she would now venture forth, but it was to visit the vault where the remains of her husband reposed, and to saunter and weep over his favourite haunts. At this time, the guardian appointed by my father happening to make a tour through Wales, paid a visit to my mother. Mr. Trevyllan was a cold-hearted, selfish, matter-of-fact man, wholly destitute of sentiment, and totally incapable of comprehending it in others. He expected to find my mother reconciled to the loss she had sustained, or at

least, the bitterness of regret melted down to a gentle melancholy. He expected, too, to find at Llandover the creature comforts, to which no one attached more importance than he did; and was consequently both disappointed and vexed, when he discovered that the sorrow of his hostess rendered her alike incapable of companionship and of superintending her household affairs, as was proved, by her granting him only a brief interview, which was passed on her part in unchecked tears and lamentations, and by a repast of so frugal a character, that not even the keen appetite given by the air of the Welch mountains could enable the epicure to tolerate it. He questioned the servants whether their mistress always pursued the same course as at present; and, being informed that since her husband's death she had wholly abandoned herself to sorrow, he formed the conclusion that her intellects must be deranged by grief; how else could her utter carelessness about her repasts be accounted for, by one who considered his daily fare as one of the most important affairs imaginable. Such an inconceivable neglect would at any time have satisfied him of the necessity of a verdict of insanity; but as the widow of his friend did not throw away her money, nor permit any extravagance in her expenditure, he felt it would be difficult to establish a case of mental derangement, on the mere grounds that she made no effort to check her grief, or pamper her appetite: so he contented himself with the determination of exerting his authority to have me placed at school, with as little delay as possible, lest, as he thought, my poor mother should make me as mad as herself. He expected much opposition from her, in the adoption of this scheme, and was agreeably surprised when none was offered. Having repeatedly heard my father express his intention of sending me to a public school, and being determined religiously to fulfil every wish of his, she yielded to Mr. Trevyllan's proposal, and I accompanied him the following day, when he left. The parting with my mother greatly affected us both. The

passionate love I had borne her before her grief had interposed a barrier between us, revived when I was leaving her; and my unrepressed regret seemed to awaken afresh her tenderness for me.

Now it was that, for the first time, I blamed myself for not having evinced a deeper sympathy in her overwhelming grief during the last year. It might have lightened the burthen of her sorrow; at all events, it must have soothed it to see that it was shared. If the tears that often fell from my eyes in secret, when thinking of my dear lost father, had been shed on her breast, they might have cooled its feverish sorrow, and I should not now have had to deplore that, checked by the sternness of her grief, I had not, as I ought to have done, partaken it. Pressed to her heart, its tumultuous throbbings seemed to communicate a magnetic influence to mine. I comprehended the extent of her sufferings, and would have given worlds to be permitted to stay with her another year, to prove that I was not cold nor forgetful, as I believe she had thought me. She, too, appeared now to understand my feelings, as our tears mingled together. She imprinted burning kisses on my brow, which was wet with her tears. She implored blessings on me — prayed that I might resemble my father — blamed herself for not having sooner comprehended me; and then, gently pushing me from her, said, "Go, while I have yet courage to let you leave me;" and, retreating into the little oratory inside her chamber, I heard her sobs, while sinking on her knees she prayed for strength to bear this new trial; and I left the home of my fathers, never more to behold my poor mother in life.

CHAPTER II.

"WHAT 's the use of crying, child?" demanded Mr. Trevyllan, when, having reached the first milestone on our journey, he found I still continued to weep. He could not have asked a question that I was more incapable of answering; and the brusquerie of the tone in which it was made, far from checking my regret, only increased it. "Come, come," said he, "you must learn to be a man, and get over this absurd habit of shedding tears. Tears are fit only for women, and they but show their weakness in indulging them."

This observation seemed to me to be nothing short of an insult offered to my poor mother, which I would gladly have resented, but my ignorance how to do so prevented the attempt, and, hurt and offended, I dried my eyes, and put my handkerchief in my pocket.

"You are a good boy," said Mr. Trevyllan, and he took my hand and shook it. "Never betray your feelings before strangers; they will only mock your distress, or envy you for any demonstrations of happiness. You will learn this as you grow older; but, in the meanwhile, it is my duty, as your guardian, to give you the benefit of my experience; whether you will profit by it, depends wholly on yourself. Be ever on your guard against the world. Conceal your errors from it, as you would from a relentless judge, whose condemnation you should tremble for; but remember it is almost as necessary to conceal, likewise, any weakness of your nature, as to hide your faults. By weakness I mean that foolish good nature, or kindness, to which some men are prone, and which renders them through life the dupes of the

artful and designing, and objects of derision to men of sense. Learn betimes to resist every hasty impulse of compliance, either with the entreaties of others, or the dictates of your own heart, and you will find cause to rejoice at this self-control hereafter. A school is a faithful miniature picture of the world. In it you may acquire the art of governing yourself, and making use of those around you. 'The boy is father to the man,' and betrays the seeds of those vices or weaknesses which are to mark his career in manhood. Study the characters of your companions; and this study will enable you to judge men in general when you go forth into the busy world, where you will find it so difficult to steer clear of suffering by them."

I listened to this counsel with a distaste that increased my dislike to the giver of it. His peering and malicious eyes, looking out from under protruding and deeply-marked brows, the hard and stern expression of his mouth, and the harsh tones of his voice, produced an unconquerable sentiment of aversion in my heart. The advice, too, so different to the opinions of my dear parents, accorded so well with the countenance of Mr. Trevyllan, and the whole manner of the man was so repulsive, that I wondered how he could have been selected by my father to fill the trust confided to him. In the course of conversation he accounted for this, by explaining to me that he had never seen my father but once since they had parted at school, and then only for a few hours.

"Your poor father was one of those warm-hearted youths who plunge headlong into friendship with the first companion chance throws in their way," observed Mr. Trevyllan. "He loved me, or fancied he did, which amounts much to the same thing, and I preferred him to any of the other lads in the school. This same proneness to rush headlong into affection without weighing the prudence of the measure, or analyzing the qualities of the object, led him to form a rash marriage, which he, however, in all his

letters to me declared had secured his happiness. That was his affair, and not mine, so I never exposed to him, as some meddling fools would have done, how much wiser a choice he might have made in wedding a country-woman of his own, with a good fortune and family connexions, that might have forwarded his interests in the world. The same want of perception and credulity which induced him to believe me endowed with all his own peculiar qualities, no doubt, led him to think that his wife was a paragon of perfection."

I drew up my head offended, and was about to pronounce an eulogium on my poor mother, when he cut me short, by adding—

"I don't want to say anything against either of your parents; I only have come to the conclusion, that as his friendship for me made your father give me credit for the possession of peculiarities the most opposite to *my* character, and congenial to his own, so may his mad passion for his wife have induced an equally false appreciation of hers. One thing is quite certain, which is, that this extravagant passion of his for her renders his death an insupportable calamity to its object, to whom life is now an unbearable burthen; whereas, had her husband been a cool, calculating, reasonable man, he would not have been blind to those manifold defects from which no woman is exempt; he would have endeavoured to correct them, and, when he died, his widow would have found consolation by the reflection, that if she had lost a husband, she had likewise lost a Mentor, whose strictures, however just, were never palateable."

Such were the observations addressed by my guardian to me. It was plain he had not been used to children, or he would have selected topics more suited to my comprehension. How, at this time, I remember his words, surprises me, as much as it will doubtlessly astonish you, my dear child; but my memory was a peculiarly retentive one; and however distasteful the subject might be, I was flattered that he considered me old enough to be

so confidential and communicative; I fancied myself more of a man, and, in consequence, assumed a more manly demeanor. I observed, that however Mr. Trevyllan prided himself on his habits of self-control with regard to his sentiments, he abandoned himself to the enjoyments of the table with the gusto of an epicure, and the gluttony of a *gourmand.*

In this particular, nothing could be so different from the habits of my father, who might be said to eat to live, and not to live to eat, so temperate was his appetite, and so frugal his repasts. He had taught me to partake sparingly of the simple fare set before me, and to satisfy my thirst with no other beverage than what was supplied by the cooling spring. Mr. Trevyllan remarked, and disapproved this system. A man, he said, should be able to live on the hardest fare, when compelled to it; but it was folly to adopt the habits of an anchorite, when opportunities offered for enjoying the pleasures of the table. He counselled, nay, insisted on my partaking the food always the most luxurious the inns could afford, or set before us, made me drink wine, to which I had previously been a stranger; and, by the time we arrived at his residence in Serle-street, near Lincoln's Inn, neither my mind nor my taste retained the purity they possessed when, only a few days before, I left my native mountains. I began to relish the flavour of wine, which at first displeased my palate, nor did the feverish thirst it excited, prevent my indulging in it, when pressed by Mr. Trevyllan. I could hear without disgust the worldly, if not misanthropic, sentiments and opinions he loved to utter, and I began to think him a wise, though not a generous-minded man. Such are the deleterious effects on a youthful and ductile mind from an association with the unworthy, even for a short period. Many a time in after days did I find the harsh precepts of Mr. Trevyllan recur to my mind, weakening, if not vanquishing, the noble sentiments instilled by my parents, which partook much more of the chivalrous than of the worldly wise.

Death, my father taught me was infinitely preferable to dishonour, nay, even to incurring its suspicion, and crime he looked on as an irrefragable proof of insanity, which entitled its perpetrator to an asylum in a mad-house. When excited into confidence by wine, I ventured to reveal these opinions to my guardian, he laughed them to scorn, said that my father had from childhood been a visionary filled with Utopian systems of the perfectibility of human nature, to which, had he lived in the busy world, he must inevitably have fallen a victim, and added that the sooner I got such folly out of my head the better.

"See," observed Mr. Trevyllan, the day after I entered his house, "the advantages derived by my system, over that of your father—look around, the walls of my dwelling are covered with pictures by the best masters, ancient and modern. Their fine colours, and beautiful scenery give me pleasure I confess, but I derive even greater gratification from the reflection that I owe them to my own prudence, and that worldly wisdom which I have through life made the guide of my actions. I admire good pictures, but I laugh in my sleeve when I visit the galleries of collectors, and hear the prices they pay. I bide my time until they are either ruined, or dead, and then at sales, I pick up for pounds what they paid hundreds for; and when these treasures are hung up in my rooms, I look on them with double satisfaction from the recollection of my paying so little for what the original owners paid so much. In the same way, I buy plate at melting prices, for which the previous possessors gave the most enormous sums by the ounce for workmanship. What say you, my lad, to giving four or five shillings an ounce for what cost thirty-five? Books, furniture, glass, china, in short, everything I require, I purchase at sales for less than a quarter of their value, and so the wise man profits by the folly of the foolish."

Such were the subjects on which Mr. Trevyllan loved to

descant for the few days I remained in his house. I have cited his sayings for two reasons: the first is, that this trifling diverts my attention for the moment from myself, just as a truant schoolboy lingers by the wayside on his route to school, to snatch a few minutes of enjoyment from idleness, though certain that he must a little later perform his allotted task; and the second, that although I had perception enough not to adopt the selfish and narrow-minded principles of Mr. Trevyllan in all things, one of his tenets, namely, the determination to conceal errors or sins from the world, exercised in after life an influence over me that has given a colour to my fate.

I entered a public school in a short time after my arrival in London, and here I began to perceive the result of my guardian's advice. Naturally shy and reserved, I had never previously detected in myself the slightest tendency to suspicion; but now, I involuntarily found myself analysing the characters of those around me, and searching for motives for their conduct. Did a schoolfellow, with the unceremonious frankness peculiar to boyhood, make advances of goodwill towards me, a suspicion that some secret motive actuated him instantly crossed my mind, and however open and natural might be his looks and manners, I held back, fearful of giving way to the sympathy he excited in my breast. This I considered to be a proof of prudence and good sense that would, if revealed to my guardian, command his esteem; and although occasionally I might yield to the temptation of a growing friendship, I soon remembered the precepts of Mr. Trevyllan, and kept aloof from placing any confidence in those who confided every thought to me. Nevertheless, when any of my schoolfellows betrayed coldness or reserve towards me, my pride was wounded, and I felt disposed to consider such treatment as an insult. Such were the results of Mr. Trevyllan's counsel and opinions. I never enjoyed the frank companionship which among boys of the same years grows into regard, and ce-

ments the friendship that often forms one of the blessings of after age.

My mother's letters were more frequent than I had anticipated. They breathed the warmest affection, and inculcated the strongest caution of preserving the high and chivalrous sense of honour that had been the guiding principle of my father. "He," would she write, "thought an unspotted fame of such vital importance, that I have heard him say he could not survive even the suspicion of a bad action, however conscious he might be of his own freedom from it; and he blessed Providence that he had never been exposed to such a trial."

The opposite opinions of my high-minded and romantic mother, who had all the pride of the noble blood of her country, and the narrow policy and unblushing selfishness that marked those of my guardian, produced the most contending feelings in my breast. My pride, encouraged by that of my mother, gradually increased in proportion to the deterioration of the qualities that might have furnished an excuse, if they could not have redeemed it. I ought to have known that nothing is more incompatible with a high sense of honour, the only stable basis for pride, than suspicion; but, alas! the counsel and the self-complacency of the rich and worldly-minded Mr. Trevyllan had tainted and blinded me to this fact, and I continued proud, when an impartial self-examination would either have taught me humility or prompted me to merit self-esteem.

My reserve, by degrees, alienated from me the companions who were at first desirous of forming a friendship. They drew back, disappointed by the coldness with which I met their advances, and listened with complacency, if not with avidity, to the ill-natured remarks of those youths who had from the commencement manifested an ill will towards me. One, however, of my schoolfellows, remained firm in his attachment. He was precisely the best-natured, and most generous boy in the whole

establishment. He shared his purse and all his possessions, with a lavish hand, with his companions; assisted them in their tasks, submitted to punishment for their faults, rather than reveal the real culprits, and in short, was one of the least selfish of human beings. Did any boy get into debt, he had recourse to Neville to extricate him. Did he neglect his lessons, Neville aided him to pass muster. Did a strong boy tyrannize over a weak, Neville protected the latter. Consequently, there was not a dissentient voice to be heard when he was acknowledged to be the best fellow in the world, and the kindest-hearted. It happened one day that Neville was present when I received a letter from my mother, enclosing me five pounds. The note dropped from the letter, and he stooped, took it up, and handed it to me.

"I am glad, Herbert, you are in cash, for I want half these five pounds," said he, as frankly and as carelessly as he would have given them away.

My first impulse was to say, "keep the whole, if you want it;" but after a moment's reflection, I checked myself, and asked, "what he wanted the money for?"

"Hang it! A lender should not question a borrower," replied he; "it looks as if he would as soon keep his money as lend it. But the truth is, Bentley is dunned for four pounds, and I have only thirty shillings to give him, so I want your two pounds ten to make up the sum."

"If you wanted it for yourself, I should readily lend it," replied I; "but for another, and that other an extravagant —"

"Hold!" interrupted he, "not another word. If we were entitled to lecture, and censure those we assist, who would ever accept aid at our hands? I have a pleasure in helping my friends out of scrapes. It is, I think, one of the pleasures as well as privileges of friendship. You think otherwise, so there 's an end of the matter," and he walked away, looking disappointed, leaving me utterly ashamed of myself. I followed him, entreated him

to take the money, nay, would have forced him to accept it, but I could not prevail.

"No, my good fellow, it is impossible! *You* have *your* notions, and I, *mine;* and now that I know yours, I could not touch your money."

The reflection that Mr. Trevyllan would have approved my conduct on this occasion, failed to silence my self-reproaches, and as I really was not a lover of money, the having saved my two pounds ten offered me no consolation under them. What must Neville think of me? was a question that occurred to my mind several times during that day, and I longed for an opportunity of explaining to him my self-imposed system of prudence and caution, in order to exonerate myself from the charge of avarice. It became evident that from this time he avoided me, and though mortified by his doing so, will it be believed, that instead of thinking he was justified by my conduct, I began to imagine that Neville, the profuse, the generous Neville, had only formerly shown a friendship towards me to furnish a claim on my purse, should his prodigality to others render such a step necessary. Do not, my beloved child, hate your unfortunate father for thus revealing the defects of his character, defects which he would fain attribute to the unworthy counsel of his guardian, yet which conscience sometimes whispers may have originated in a taint in his nature, which left him but too open to evil impressions. Pride prevented my seeking the wished for explanation with Neville. Why urge it when it was quite evident *he* desired it not? No, he had formed his opinion of me, had misjudged my motives, and kept away from me, and I certainly would not humble myself by further parley on the subject. By gradual, but not slow degrees, I became more and more isolated in the school. I fancied that this proceeded from Neville having disclosed the fact of my refusing to lend him the trifle he asked for. This belief increased my suspicion of him until it ripened into dislike; and in the in-

dulgence of this sentiment I lost sight of the cause of my former self-reproaches, and believed myself an injured person.

After having passed a year at school, I expected to return to my mother, to spend the vacation with her, but when I wrote to my guardian to propose it, he stated, that he had decided I should not return to Wales until my education was completed. He urged that my mother had now got accustomed to my absence, and that a visit to her would but renew her regret at parting from me again. This reasoning by no means satisfied me, but from his decision Mr. Trevyllan allowed no appeal. He arranged that I should pass the vacation with him, and thus, unhappily, an opportunity was afforded him of inculcating still more profoundly in my mind, those suspicions of mankind, and that dread of its censure, which, henceforth, became rooted in my heart. Mr. Trevyllan insinuated himself into my confidence, he plied me with wine until I laid bare to him every thought, even to the self-reproaches I had made myself on the subject of Neville; and he laughed to scorn my weakness, as he termed it, while he applauded my prudence in refusing his request.

"This Neville," said he, "is evidently a fool, or a hunter after popularity. He lavishes his money on his companions, thus encouraging their extravagance in order that he may lay them under obligations, and when he no longer has sufficient to satisfy their demands, he has recourse to you, and finding you too wise to comply with his exactions, he resents it, forsooth, and avoids you."

Thus, he imprinted still more deeply on my ductile mind, those feelings which so greatly deteriorated his character and sullied mine.

We generally travelled during my vacations, and the long *tête à têtes*, shut up in a carriage, furnished my guardian with ample time to descant on the cunning, deception, and artifices of mankind, as well as on the necessity of guarding against them.

"It is the custom," would he say, "to censure selfishness as something to be despised, but never was there a greater mistake. Selfishness is the armour furnished us by Providence as a defence against that weakness denominated sympathy, which lays us open to feel for, and assist, persons in misfortune, to the injury of our personal comfort, and often to the detriment of our fortunes."

How many stories had he to tell illustrative of this theory! The generous, the kind, the noble-minded were, according to his system, the certain dupes of the designing; and the poor and unfortunate, merited reproof for the errors that led to their destitution, rather than pity or assistance, he being convinced that poverty must invariably originate in want of prudence — a sin of deep dye in his eyes. Oh! the sin of clouding over the gay sunshine of childhood by the worldly wisdom that experience should alone bring, tempered as it ever is, by the peculiar character of him who acquires it! But to receive it second-hand, coloured by the prejudices of a selfish mind glorying in its own crude, unwholesome wisdom, is indeed a misfortune! Better were it to suffer all the penalties that originate in inexperience, and a too favourable opinion of mankind, than to become prematurely soured, and suspicious, afraid to trust in our fellow-creatures for sympathy, or to show them our own.

By degrees, the desire to visit my mother faded away from my mind. Perhaps her letters unconsciously aided the wishes of Mr. Trevyllan on this point, for they were filled with a regret as poignant for the loss of her husband, as when I left her, and I dreaded the dark chamber and ceaseless lamentations to which I believed a meeting with her would inevitably expose me. I was the less compunctious for not urging my guardian to allow me to visit her, as her recent letters informed me that an old friend of her's, lately become a widow like herself, had come to see her. "We were intimate friends in happier times," wrote my mother,

"at Seville, where she, then a young wife, accompanied her husband. They were as happy, and loved each other almost as much as your dear father and I did. This worthy man died, leaving her with two daughters — lovely creatures — ill provided with the goods of fortune, and she came to seek sympathy and companionship near me. Similar affliction has drawn closer the bond of friendship between us. Our tears often mingle together, and we find a consolation, mournful though it be, in dwelling on the memory of other days, and on those who formed our happiness. I have fitted up the pretty cottage you may remember at Llantrisant, for Mrs. Maitland, and few days pass in which we do not meet."

The knowledge that she was no longer alone, quieted my conscience, and afforded me pleasure. I wrote to her frequently, and so affectionately, that my letters, which she showed to Mrs. Maitland, interested that lady deeply in my favour. Her daughters, too, were told what a good son I was, and joined, as my mother wrote me, in longing to see the son of their kind friend, their second mother — for so they considered her.

CHAPTER III.

The attention with which I listened to the worldly counsel of Mr. Trevyllan, and the docility with which I adopted it, flattered his *amour-propre*, and conciliated his friendship. Young as I was, he was delighted to have instilled into my mind the defects and prejudices of his own, and judged more and more favourably of me in proportion as he remarked my suspicion and distrust of mankind. The coldness of my companions, on which I sometimes animadverted to him, he declared to be caused by their anger at not being able to dupe me; and he asserted that, at school, as in the world, a popular person must either be a dupe, or a duper; and, as I was too proud to be the last, and too sensible to be the first, I must never expect popularity.

"But Neville," said I, "is the most popular boy in the school, yet, I assure you, *he* does not want for cleverness. He invariably upholds his own opinions when he believes himself to be in the right, flatters no one, appears to be regardless of flattery; and although his superiority is undisputed, excites no envy."

"I see you are dazzled by this same Neville," replied Mr. Trevyllan; "but, remember, you judge only from appearances. Whatever may be the envy he excites, — and that he does excite it there can be no doubt, as never did superiority of any kind escape envy, — the obligations he confers on his companions preclude them from betraying any symptom of their entertaining such a sentiment, and he, poor dupe, will go on lavishing favours on them, and believing in their affection, until some fine day he discovers he has been their dupe."

And yet so inclined was I to like and esteem Neville, that the

good feeling he excited in my own breast rendered me well inclined to give credit to the sincerity of the regard professed, or rather evinced towards him by others, that it required all the sophistical warnings and suspicions, so continually instilled into my mind by my guardian, to prevent me from opening my whole soul to him, and endeavouring to win his friendship. It pained me to be thought ill of by Neville; and had he not plainly let me see that he wished to avoid me, I do believe that, in spite of the opinions and advice of Mr. Trevyllan, I would have laid bare to him all that was passing in my heart, and allowed the influence of his healthy mind to heal the canker that was corroding mine. But here, too, pride and mistrust, the besetting sins engendered in my nature, operated to vanquish this strong desire. What, was *I* to pursue one who evidently shunned me? Was I to expose my failings to one who had already judged, and condemned me, as was proved by his avoidance of all intercourse between us? No, this would be too humiliating even were I sure that my advances towards a renewal of our former good intelligence would be well received, but with a chance of the possibility that he might decline my offered civility, refuse my confidence, and tell his companions that he had done so, I could not stoop to such a step, though my heart yearned for his friendship. I stood alone in the school. I had no friend to share my pleasures, or my pains. The boy, whom Neville had broken off intimacy with, no one else wished to seek; and this coldness on the part of my schoolfellows, acting on my pride, operated still more strongly than the advice of Mr. Trevyllan, to increase the *hauteur* and indifference towards them which I had assumed.

Years rolled on, but my position in the school remained unchanged; for though many of my contemporaries left it for college, or to enter professions, some remained behind; and the new comers who replaced those who departed had imbibed their prejudices against me. Often did I propose to Mr. Trevyllan that

I should be placed in another school, where, having no prejudices to contend with, I might make friends; but *he* laughed these proposals to scorn, declared it would be weak and unmanly to be conquered by those who only avoided, because they could not make me their dupe. He said I must support my position with fortitude, and show no deference to the opinions of persons who felt no good-will towards me, and for whom I consequently could experience none.

"You ought to remember," added he, "that persons who wish to learn to fence must begin with foils. Consider your schoolfellows as foils. Do not let them touch you; and by this means you will be prepared for the more serious combats to which in society every man is exposed, when the foils being thrown away, he must defend himself with real weapons. Leave school, and your enemies will say 'we drove him away;' and when you meet them in the world, they will be ready to attempt the same game with you that succeeded at school. But maintain your place, let them see you attach no importance to their opinions, and though in future years they may not feel inclined to cultivate your intimacy, they will at least be deterred from molesting you."

Who that has not experienced it, can judge the misery of a youthful heart yearning for affection, but checked by pride from avowing it, and deploring the errors that preclude its growth; errors, too, not natural to the soil, but the forced fruit of an evil cultivator, against whose unhealthy influence the heart has never ceased to rebel? "Put not confidence in man," was the often repeated caution of Mr. Trevyllan. "Never let even your friend — your wife, when you are old enough to have one — acquire the knowledge of any circumstance, the betrayal of which could injure or give you pain. If you commit a fault, conceal it within the most secret recess of your heart, for be assured that man's happiness can never be secure who trusts another."

Such were the reiterated maxims of the person to whom my noble-minded father confided his only son; such the man entrusted with my destiny; and who, fearful that the romantic turn of my poor mother, and the chivalrous feelings that governed her, might counteract his counsels, kept me away from her; and thus not only destroyed the happiness of my youth, but laid up for my maturity the seeds of those failings which have given a colour to my after life. During the long and tedious years passed at school, I never had an opportunity of enjoying the humanising influence of female society. No woman, save his servants, and they were as unfeminine as aught in woman shape could be, ever passed the threshold of Mr. Trevyllan. He invariably spoke of the sex in terms of unmitigated contempt, as weak, capricious, giddy creatures, fit only to be made the toys of our lighter hours, but wholly incapable of becoming rational companions or friends. Often did the image of my absent mother, in her devoted and all-engrossing love to my father while he lived, and her passionate and enduring grief for his loss, rise up to destroy his calumnies of her sex; but I dreaded to name her, lest he should. in his cynicism, utter some taunt that I could not have borne to hear applied to her. This total seclusion from all female society rendered the sex much more attractive in my eyes. Every pretty face I saw, when passing through the streets, appeared almost angelic in my sight, and I endowed its possessor with every amiable and engaging quality, and formed in my mind a little romance, of which she was the imaginary heroine. My dreams were haunted by these ambulating beauties, a chance encounter with whom in the streets made my heart beat quicker, and sent the blood to my cheeks; but such was my timidity, that had I met one of them alone, and far from the ken of mortal, I should have wanted courage to address her, nay more, would probably have fled from her had she addressed me.

And now I entered college, filled with hope that I might find

none of my schoolfellows there, and consequently that a chance remained of forming a favourable impression on my new acquaintances. But this hope was of brief duration. No less than seven of my former companions, if indeed those with whom I held no companionship could thus be termed, had entered Christchurch before me; and not one of the seven possessing the generosity of mind or goodness of heart which characterised Neville, my unpopularity at school, and its causes were soon revealed, probably exaggerated, and I found no one desirous to extend to me the hand of amity, or to question the sentence of exclusion from intimacy, which here, as at school, kept me apart from my contemporaries. How often have I wished that some tangible slight, some premeditated offence, gave me the right to demand reparation from some one of these young men, who, while avoiding all intimacy, were so studiously on their guard not to furnish me with an excuse for questioning their motives, that I could not demand satisfaction. My sensitiveness and susceptibility to take offence now became irritated into morbidness, and was only kept within bounds by the dread of any demonstration of it exposing me to ridicule — a dread which tortured me. My progress in my studies was more rapid as well as more solid from the seclusion in which I lived. I had none of the interruptions springing from sociability which so frequently draw others from their tasks: hence my success, which was also probably aided by a strong desire to excel those who evinced indifference towards me. The reputation attained by my assiduity, and its results, did not tend to diminish the coldness of my fellow collegians. I was sneered at as a pedant, a bookworm, a fellow devoid of spirit, who set myself up as a model to be cited when the professors wished to reproach the idle and dissipated. Conscious of the dislike of those around me, and anxious to seize on some mark of it that would justify my demanding satisfaction for the affront, I furnished, by the constraint and *hauteur* of my

manner, fresh cause for their dislike and avoidance. Among the young men were some, however, who after a time made advances towards acquaintanceship with me. But they were not the companions I would have chosen, being precisely in positions so humiliating that an intimacy with them must have for ever sunk me in my own esteem. They had incurred the dislike and contempt of those under whose avoidance I smarted, and believing that this circumstance would be a passport to my favour, they made their approaches by severely animadverting on them.

I felt the blow aimed at my pride, and repulsed their advances with a *fierté*, that rendered them, from that hour, my most implacable enemies. They had been suspected, if not openly accused, of profiting by the inexperience of certain of their companions at play; and, though aware of the suspicion, took no steps to justify themselves, or, if wronged, to call to account those who entertained such suspicions. That such men should presume to seek acquaintance with me, was one of the severest blows ever inflicted on my pride, and while recoiling from it, it increased my sense of injury towards those, who, by their avoidance, had subjected me to it.

My vacations, as when at school, were passed at Mr. Trevyllan's. Sometimes I accompanied him to the continent, but there, as in London, he lived apart from society, and I, consequently, had no opportunity afforded me of entering it. We spent the mornings in sight-seeing, the evenings in theatres, and returned to England as ignorant of the manners and customs of the persons in whose country we had been sojourning, as if we had never entered it. Among the prejudices of Mr. Trevyllan was a strong dislike to foreigners. "If England contains many bad men, be assured the continent possesses no good ones," would he say. "Foreigners cover over their defects with a thick coating of politeness, that helps to conceal them, rendering

them thereby more dangerous, because hidden; whereas, an Englishman is less adroit. You soon find him out; therefore, if I always put forth my feelers before I admit a countryman to acquaintanceship, I take especial care to shun foreigners, as I would plague and pestilence."

Strange to say, these illiberal prejudices failed to make any unfavourable impression on my mind, easily as it had hitherto yielded to the opinions of my guardian. He acknowledged, that he had no personal experience to lead him to the conclusions he had formed with regard to the general turpitude of foreigners; and this acknowledgment, induced me, not only to disbelieve his assertions with regard to them, but also, to question their justice with regard to our own countrymen. An oppressive weight seemed removed from my breast, the moment I began to think better of mankind, and I looked on him who had so long poisoned my mind against my fellow men as a slanderer; a sorcerer, who had robbed my youth of happiness, by covering all that was fair and bright with a dark pall, which had chilled and separated me from sympathy. His wise saws, his constant cautions, became odious to me; and not unfrequently did I incur his anger, by defending mankind against his unceasing attacks on it. He declared that after all the pains he had taken to bestow on me the fruit of his own experience, he began to fear I should nevertheless become as credulous a victim to the wicked and designing, as if he had never armed me against them; and added, that my obstinacy in pursuing my own erroneous opinions, unbased as they were by the experience, which a long contact with society can alone bestow, as a new proof of the unworthiness of human nature. In escaping from the misanthropy that had so long enthralled me, I was rushing into an opposite error. The world assumed as fair an aspect to my view, after the mental blindness that had obscured my vision, as the blue sky and bright verdure, does to one, who, long suffering from cataract, is at length restored to sight. I felt dis-

posed to think all men good, all women fair and pure. The conventional sentiments of virtue, uttered on the stage, not only found an echo in my breast, but I was disposed to believe that the actor who spoke them felt them as profoundly as I did; and the actresses were perfect heroines in my eyes. Their beauty dazzled, their address in enacting their *rôles*, charmed me. Mr. Trevyllan surmised this, though I did not express it. He divined it as accurately, as persons who have an antipathy to cats become conscious that one of those animals is in a room, however carefully concealed it may be.

"I dare be sworn," said he, "that you think that girl, who has just left the stage, little less than a divinity. Come, you shall see her!" and taking my arm, he led me out of the box where we sat, spoke to one of the box-keepers, into whose hand he slipped a piece of silver, was guided by him to a private door, through which, after some few minutes parleying on the part of the said box-keeper, we were permitted to enter; and on a piece of gold being given to another man behind the scenes, we were conducted to the dressing-room of the actress, I had only a few minutes previously thought so transcendantly lovely. A silver coin to the *femme de chambre*, gained us admission to the sanctuary of her mistress, who, panting and exhausted, reclined in an easy chair, and presented a most appalling and fearful contrast, to her I expected to see. The light of a flaring lamp, the odour of which infected the chamber with a most offensive smell, revealed to me a woman, past the meridian of life, whose face was covered with white and red paint, so coarsely laid on, as to leave no doubt of the unskilful artifice, whose lips were smeared with red, and whose eyebrows with black. The gaudy tinsel of her dress, the false stones stuck in her hair, and the care-worn and haggard countenance, struck me with such disgust and dismay, that I involuntarily turned away with a loathing I cannot describe.

"Tell the Signora," said Mr. Trevyllan, "that we ask her

pardon for this interruption, occasioned by mistaking her, when on the stage, for an acquaintance," and we hurried from the room.

"That poor painted woman," resumed he, "differs not more from the attractive person she appeared to be when we beheld her at a distance, enacting her part, than do men and women when they are approached closely, and that their artifices and deceptions are exposed. Had I not conducted you near that woman, you would have left the theatre with the impression that she was young and beautiful. Let this serve as a lesson to you, not to be imposed on by appearances, and I shall not grudge the money I bestowed, to gain you admission to the dressing-room of Signora Malatesta."

Mr. Trevyllan was as delighted at having exposed to me the sad reality of the poor actress's face and person, as he always was when he laid bare the errors and vices of human kind, and I thanked him as little for this last act of friendship, as I had done for former ones of a similar nature. Few are ever pleased by the destruction of an illusion, and fewer still are grateful to the destroyer.

CHAPTER IV.

I RETURNED to college after my last tour on the continent, almost as ignorant of mankind as when I left it. I had no friend to welcome me back, to question me about what I had seen in foreign lands, or to draw my attention from self, by interesting me about others. The same cold civilities, limited to the common courtesies of life, which, while they never approach cordiality, leave no opening for questioning why it is withheld, met me at every side, except on that of the masters', who distinguished me by an attention as marked as the avoidance of my fellow-collegians. A few days after my return to Christchurch, walking alone one fine evening, as was my wont, by the banks of the Isis, I picked up a reticule, and seeing two ladies in advance of me, I concluded that it must appertain to one of them. I hurried on until I overtook them, and presenting the reticule, found that my conjecture had been right; it belonged to the elder of the ladies, who thanked me so warmly for its restoration, that instead of pursuing my walk alone, I entered into conversation with the ladies, and continued with them. The younger was about sixteen, and so extremely beautiful and graceful, that it was impossible for any man to behold, without admiring her. She mingled little in the conversation carried on by her companion and myself, but the few words she uttered were marked by good sense.

"You are not quite unknown to me, Mr. Herbert," observed the elder lady. "My friend Mr. Everett has often spoken to me of your attention to your studies, and the success with which it has been crowned; but are you not too much engrossed by them, and might you not sometimes find leisure to enter society?"

I blushed, stammered, and made some only half-intelligible reply, and this led the lady into a few civil speeches on the pleasure my society would afford the circumscribed, but not unintellectual circle of which she formed a member, and to which every student of good acquirements and irreproachable conduct was welcome. I thought, but perhaps it might only be fancy, that the fair young creature who walked by the side of the elder lady, looked at me, as if she too would have been glad if the reasoning of her friend induced me to enter that social circle ready to open for my reception, but a deep blush and down-cast lids prevented my ascertaining, from a further inspection of that fair face, how far my conjecture was correct.

"This is my niece, Miss Melville, Mr. Herbert, who only arrived last evening, at Oxford, from London, where she has been finishing her education, if such a task can indeed ever be finished; for do we not find, every day that passes over our heads, bring us some fresh knowledge, notwithstanding that the more we acquire, the less we find we possess."

The deep blush had faded from the cheek of Miss Melville, leaving it so delicately fair (not pale) that I thought she looked even more lovely than when it was suffused with rose colour. I was assenting to the justice of the elder lady's observation, when suddenly two of my fellow-collegians approached us, and saluted my new acquaintance. They were, by her, presented to her niece, to whom they immediately addressed some very animated compliments, expressed their long impatience to have the happiness of being made known to her, and their satisfaction at her becoming an inhabitant of Oxford. The young lady appeared to be more embarrassed than pleased by their attentions, which her aunt, observing, came to her aid, and told the gentlemen that Miss Melville, not being accustomed to compliments, would, she was sure, readily dispense with them, and prefer a more rational conversation. The truth was, that both the young men

being passionate admirers of female beauty, were evidently captivated by hers, and each, fearful of being rivalled by his friend, endeavoured to surpass him in the dangerous art of flattery, in the hope of propitiating her favour. She received their compliments with as much coldness and reserve as was consistent with politeness, while I, an anxious observer of what was passing, felt as much pleased with her maidenly and dignified behaviour, as I was displeased by their forwardness and presumption. A formal bow was the only recognition of acquaintance that passed between these gentlemen and myself, and they, confining all their attention to Miss Melville, left her aunt to maintain a conversation with me. Mrs. Scuddamore, for such I discovered was the name of this lady, was a widow, and resided with a brother, a well-known and much-respected Professor at Christchurch. Her husband had been a colonel in the army, and a very distinguished officer, with whom she had not only constantly lived with his regiment, but with whom she had actually made more than one campaign. A well-informed and sensible woman — she had many excellent qualities, which had endeared her to the brother officers of her husband — the elder ones considering her in the light of a sister, while the younger looked on her as a mother, whose good advice and kind offices were ever at their service. This familiarity of many years with camps and barracks, had considerably detracted from the reserved manners peculiar to well-bred Englishwomen, without, however, abating one particle of the high principle and strict morality for which they are remarkable. A woman who has "roughed it," as the military phrase is, in a barrack, in some out of the way country quarter, making the best of a position requiring no ordinary share of good humour to sustain, and who has not only shared the dangers of her husband and his brother officers in perilous campaigns, but assisted to dress the wounds and nursed the wounded among them, can hardly be expected to retain the decorous reserve and

feminine gentleness which form so great a charm in her sex. It was only strangers who found fault with the absence of these womanly qualities, for those who had opportunities of knowing Mrs. Scuddamore well, thought their loss amply compensated for by the cordial kindness of her nature, and the frank and unceremonious friendliness of her manners. It was these peculiarities that led her at once to enter freely into conversation with me, and to encourage my joining her without any previous introduction, on an occasion when most, if not all other women would have merely bowed or curtsied their thanks for the restoration of the reticule; but I was so ignorant of the usages of society, that this *manque des convénances* did not strike me as it would have done others, and relieved by her frankness from the shyness and constraint under which I always laboured, I felt more disposed to be grateful for her good nature than inclined to question the unceremonious proof of it extended to me. I continued to walk by Mrs. Scuddamore's side, listening to her animated and interesting conversation, while the two gentlemen, whose presence afforded me anything but pleasure, remained by the side of Miss Melville, who never for a moment quitted the arm of her aunt.

Mrs. Scuddamore made several ineffectual attempts to make the conversation general, but my fellow-collegians avoided entering into it, confining themselves to a complimentary strain of remarks addressed exclusively to Miss Melville, and I took especial care to show as decided a desire to refrain from any interchange of words with them, as they did towards me. I could see that Mrs. Scuddamore observed this mutual avoidance with surprise. She became silent and *distraite*, proposed returning home, and I was more than half-tempted to make my bow and retire, but a dread lest such a step might be construed to my disadvantage checked me, and I continued by the side of Mrs. Scuddamore until she reached her abode, at the door of which,

although invited to enter, I took my leave. I was glad to find that my fellow-collegians also declined entering the house, as it would retard the explanation Mrs. Scuddamore could not fail to demand relative to the marked coldness existing between them and me. They could only explain it by some statements disadvantageous to me. The simple fact, which they would be sure to assert, that I had no friends in college, that, in short, I was avoided, would in itself be ample cause to justify Mrs. Scuddamore for declining any further acquaintance with me. All these thoughts presented themselves vividly to my mind as I left the door, and pursued my way to Christ Church, the two gentlemen crossing to the opposite side of the street, though pursuing the same direction. The beautiful face and thoughtful eyes of Miss Melville haunted me, and mingled with the painful emotions excited by reflecting on the evil impression which the conduct of the young men was calculated to make on the minds of those who witnessed it. I almost regretted that I had formed any acquaintance with the ladies, greatly as I admired one of them, so certain did I feel that some disagreeable termination would inevitably attend it, owing to the dislike entertained towards me in college; and I deliberated with myself whether it would not be more dignified and consistent with the respect due to myself to avoid all further intercourse with Mrs. Scuddamore, and her fair niece, than to wait the chance of their taking a similar step towards me. And then came the thought that my refraining from taking advantage of the invitation of Mrs. Scuddamore, pressed too with a warmth and friendliness that had evidently displeased the young men present when it was given, would amount to a tacit acknowledgment that I was unworthy of her kindness, and this thought added to my chagrin. After much deliberation I determined to pay her a visit the following day, and let her reception decide my future intercourse with these ladies. I would judge whether or not they had imbibed any prejudice against me

from the coolness of my fellow collegians, and if I found them as well disposed as before, I would certainly cultivate an acquaintance which possessed so much attraction for me. I dreamt of Miss Melville that night, and perpetrated a sonnet addressed to her next morning. These two unusual occurrences to one so inexperienced in the tender passion as myself, convinced me that I was indeed in love, and such a conviction goes far to accomplish that which may be, in truth, but a mere passing fancy. Ignorant of the world as I was, I knew not that the seclusion in which I had dwelt, the absence of all female society, and, above all, never having lived in habits of confidential intimacy with any of my own sex, had prepared my heart to receive an impression from the first pretty face that chance might throw in my way, but that it required time, and a knowledge of the individual, to ripen admiration into affection.

No; I believe that Love full grown, and ready armed with all his darts, was to jump into my heart with as great facility as Minerva had sprung into life from the brain of Jove, and I yielded to what I fancied was my destiny, and cherished a foolish passion for a girl I had seen but once, and with whom I had never exchanged three words. Strange infatuation of youth, fruit of inexperience!

I was, however, far from viewing my sudden passion for Miss Melville in its true light. Nay, had any one attempted to explain it to me as the natural result of my previous mode of existence, I would have resented the suggestion with anger, as an insult. I persuaded myself that she, and she only, could have awakened the dormant passion in my heart, which at sight of her burst into an unextinguishable flame. I endowed her with every charm, every accomplishment, with the reckless profusion with which only youthful lovers can enrich the object of their first attachment, and having created this idol, I, like Pygmalion, became in love with my own work. A new world

opened to me, and Miss Melville was the enchantress, at the touch of whose magic wand the doors of this Paradise flew asunder to give me entrance. All nature seemed changed. The skies were brighter, the earth greener, the trees more beautiful, the flowers more fragrant. And all this had been effected by one with the tones of whose voice my ear was yet unfamiliar, with whose character, disposition, and modes of thinking I was a stranger! Oh! ye young beauties, who, when ye regard your images in a mirror, count on the triumphs the lovely faces reflected in it can achieve, how little do ye doubt that the charms on which ye gaze with delighted vanity, potent though they may be, are far less so, than those with which the ardent imagination of a lover can endow ye. Never did nature create aught so transcendently fair as that ideal "which youthful poets fancy when they love," and every youthful lover becomes a poet. As I dwelt on the image of Miss Melville, so rapidly did its lovelinesse increase in my mind's eye that I became dazzled, intoxicated. She appeared a miracle of beauty, and after I had indulged several hours' reverie on her charms, I felt surprised that I had been able to contemplate them so coldly when she was present. I could now comprehend the admiration excited by the first glance at her in my fellow collegians, and almost excuse the complimente they had addressed to her, and which, on the previous day, had appeared so fulsome and impertinent, when I listened to them.

"How flat, stale, and unprofitable,"

appeared the long hours of that day, until released from college, I was at liberty to go forth in search of the object which occupied all my thoughts. Never had I before taken any pains about my appearance beyond what propriety required, but now I could not satisfy myself, so anxious was I to appear to advantage in her eyes, and for the nonce, I was in danger of becoming a fop. I

looked in my mirror frequently before I went forth, and never felt so dissatisfied with my own appearance, so plain and forbidding did it look after the bright image that filled my thoughts. How could one so fair, so matchless, condescend to glance with a favourable eye on aught so rude as me? was the next thought, and such a sense of my own personal demerits flashed on my mind, that I almost dreaded to meet her, whom a few minutes before I longed to behold. If humility be one of the proofs of love, then indeed might I well believe in the depth and sincerity of my passion, for never did the plainest of my sex feel a stronger consciousness of his own want of attraction than did I.

CHAPTER V.

I CALLED at Mrs. Scuddamore's, and was admitted. My reception was more than polite, it was cordial. That lady had a frankness of demeanour as well as of manner that soon set every one at his ease. Miss Melville was seated at her tambour-frame when I entered, and a soft blush mantled her face as she raised it to return my salute. If I had thought her beautiful the previous evening, how much more lovely did she now appear in my eyes, her finely shaped head no longer, as then, concealed by a bonnet, and her exquisitely modelled bust, uncovered by a shawl, its delicate proportions revealed by the close fitting white morning robe in which she was attired. Her snowy throat, round as a pillar of marble, supported her head with a peculiar grace and dignity. I could hardly withdraw my eyes from her; and she, as if conscious that they were fixed on her face, seldom raised hers, but pursued her work, her small, rounded, white hand and taper fingers appearing to singular advantage while employed in passing and repassing the gay-coloured silken threads.

"I was afraid you would not come," said Mrs. Scuddamore, "for you are, I have taken it into my head, a little *sauvage* — come, confess, am I not right? You must get over this; for nothing mars a man's success in life so much as shyness."

The colour rose to my face as well as to Miss Melville's at this well meant but *brusque* remark of her aunt's, and I felt my admiration of her increased by this sympathy between us.

"You are going to tell me it is constitutional — that you can't help it," resumed the lady; "but that is all nonsense. I have

known young ensigns join their regiments, to whom one could not say 'Good morrow,' without their blushing like a boarding-school girl; just as Georgina did two minutes ago — I suppose for the sake of keeping you company — yet before they had been a month at mess, they would have been the first to have laughed at the *mauvaise honte* of a new comer, so completely had they conquered their shyness."

Miss Melville's face was now a deep rose-colour, and she bent lower than before over her embroidery-frame to conceal it, while I muttered something almost as incomprehensible to myself as to Mrs. Scuddamore, about the seclusion of a college life tending to encourage shyness.

"But your fellow-collegians — and I know several — are not shy," said the lady. "On the contrary, I think they seem rather in the other extreme. For example, the two young men who joined us last evening, and who nearly overpowered Georgina, whom they had never previously seen, with compliments."

I felt my embarrassment increase every moment during this scene. I knew not what to say, and Mrs. Scuddamore was not a woman to let a subject drop once she had commenced it. I endeavoured to divert her attention to other topics — talked of the environs, the walks, the rides, and that unfailing subject to an Englishman — the weather.

"Come, come," replied Mrs. Scuddamore, "I see you want to shirk the subject, and I won't let you. I was so long a sort of mother to a set of young men like yourself, in my dear husband's regiment, that I can't help thinking myself still privileged, as then, to give advice, or call to account. Why were you so distant and reserved with your fellow-collegians last evening?"

"We know little of each other, and therefore are on very distant terms," was my stupid answer.

"And whose fault is it?" demanded my persecutor. "Do they avoid your acquaintance, or is it you who will not encourage theirs?"

"I believe the avoidance is mutual."

"But there must be some cause, some motive for this; and as a man of spirit, the person conscious of being avoided ought to come to an explanation with him or them who showed him such a slight. I am the widow of an old soldier, as brave a man as ever commanded a battalion; and he, I am sure, would have thought very ill of a young officer who allowed another to avoid him without demanding satisfaction. It won't do to say 'he avoids me, and I avoid him.' No; a man must permit no one to have the air of declining his acquaintance, however he may be disposed to undervalue the person offering such a slight. The laws of honour — and I admit no other in such affairs — are very strict in such matters. I have known a hundred quarrels, and as many duels, for similar causes; and I advise you, if you wish to maintain the respect due to every gentleman, never to allow a man to assume the air of avoiding your acquaintance."

"Dear aunt!" interrupted Miss Melville, casting an appealing glance at the soldier-like Mrs. Scuddamore.

"Dear aunt, what?" reiterated the aunt. But the bashful girl became silent, and the lady resumed: "Ah! I see, that foolish Georgy is afraid I may get you into a duel. And what if I do? Better one now than several perhaps hereafter, when some of those young men who believe they shun you, while you believe you avoid them, may hereafter meet you in society, and their air of avoidance may lead to disagreeable results. Honour before everything, is my maxim. It was that of Colonel Scuddamore, than whom a better judge on such points never existed. I remember once, when a young officer joined his regiment, some of the juniors took a dislike to his dress, the cut of his hair, his accent, or some other equally efficient cause of objection, and

arranged among themselves to send him to Coventry, as it is called, but which means, shunning intercourse with a man. The young fellow, a brave lad too, took fire at this marked coldness; and not knowing on which, of some six or eight young men, he was to fix a quarrel, wrote a challenge to each. The Colonel discovered it, called a meeting of the officers in question, and insisted on knowing the cause of the challenge. They confessed it had originated in their avoidance of the young ensign. He demanded the cause. No reason could be assigned, except that the new comer's air and manner had not pleased them. 'I consider myself as good a judge on this point, gentlemen,' said he, 'as you. I see nothing to find fault with in the air and manner of Mr. —; and much as I disapprove duelling in my regiment, I am forced to admit that Mr. — could do nothing less than what he has done, after the slight offered to him. I will allow no man to be sent to Coventry in my regiment; for, should he merit such a proceeding, I will take care he does not remain in it. I will speak to this young officer, and bring him to reason; and I insist that every one of you who have shown him a slight, will apologise. Men of honour should ever be as ready to express regret when in the wrong, as to maintain their opinions when in the right. I will dine at the mess to-day, where I expect to see perfect harmony restored; and this young man, who has proved his sense of honour, and courage, treated with the cordiality to which, as a brave brother soldier, he is entitled.' This was the way in which Colonel Scuddamore settled such matters, and this is the way in which I would advise every man to act when a slight is offered him."

Mrs. Scuddamore had hardly concluded this last sentence, when Percival and Mordaunt, my two fellow-collegians, were announced, and entered the room. They looked surprised and displeased when they perceived me, and their bow of recognition was so slight as to exempt me from the necessity of returning it.

Both approached Miss Melville, and, drawing a chair on each side of her, seemed disposed to forget the presence of Mrs. Scuddamore and myself. I felt that lady's eyes were on me, and this increased my perturbation. I was inclined to leave the room; indeed, I arose for that purpose, but a moment's reflection induced me to resume my seat, fully determined to take an early opportunity of seeking an explanation with the gentlemen present. It was no want of courage that had hitherto withheld me from such a measure, and often and often had I contemplated it, but pride — ungovernable pride — strange as the assertion may seem, had prevented my putting it into execution. What, was I to give them the triumph of thus acknowledging that *they* had offended me, when I had invariably maintained the air of having avoided *them?* But *now* that I had been told by another, and that other a woman too, what was the right conduct to pursue, I determined no longer to submit to what in my secret soul I felt to be a premeditated train of slights.

"I was just repeating to Mr. Herbert," said Mrs. Scuddamore, "an incident that occurred in the regiment of my husband relative to a young officer, who, for no earthly reason, some of his brother officers were disposed to send to Coventry, and for which the young officer called them out."

"They probably had some cause for wishing to send him to Coventry?" observed Percival.

"None — positively, none; except the absurd and puerile one of not approving his dress, his voice, the cut of his hair, or some other foolish motive for dislike."

"You know the verses, Madam," said Mordaunt: —

" 'I do not like thee, Dr. Fell;
The reason why, I cannot tell;
But this I know, I feel full well —
I do not like thee, Dr. Fell.'

Be assured that there is much meaning in these often quoted lines. One cannot always explain, even to one's self, the precise motive for dislike, nor conquer a repugnance."

"For my part," remarked Percival, "I see no reason why one should. The world is large enough for every man to find persons who do not inspire him with dislike, without compelling the necessity of his associating with those who do."

"Ah, well! had you been in my husband's regiment, he would have insisted on your behaving with politeness to your brother officers, however you might have disliked them, unless they had indeed behaved ill to you. Colonel Scuddamore never allowed symptoms of dislike to be displayed towards each other by his officers."

"Perhaps the officers of his regiment were not over fastidious in their tastes, and consequently were not given to entertain dislikes?" said Mordaunt, assuming a supercilious air.

"They were as gentlemanly a corps of officers as any in the army," replied Mrs. Scuddamore, turning red in the face; "and his example and knowledge of discipline were too well calculated to render them so, to admit a doubt of the fact."

"Heaven forbid that I should call the merit of the colonel or his regiment in question! It would be unpardonable in me who have so often been enlightened on the subject!" observed Mordaunt, with a sarcastic smile.

"It would be unpardonable in any one who ever heard of Colonel Scuddamore," retorted his widow, warmly; "for his bravery and gentlemanlike conduct were acknowledged, not only by those who knew him, but by all who ever heard his name mentioned."

"Your suffrage on these points, Madam, is quite sufficient to satisfy Mordaunt and myself. Ladies, and particularly those who have gone through a campaign, and lived in barracks, must be excellent judges, not only of discipline and gentlemanly man-

ners, but also of refinement." And Percival assumed a mock gravity while uttering this remark, that indicated his intention of quizzing Mrs. Scuddamore.

"I don't think that you, Sir, can be much of a judge on the subject we are conversing on," replied Mrs. Scuddamore; "for a knowledge of gentlemanly conduct, or refinement, would prevent your attempting to banter a woman."

"*I* attempt to banter you?" interrupted Percival. "By Jove, I would as soon attempt it with the most experienced field-officer in the army!"

"And I," said Mordaunt, "who look on you, Madam, as the best authority on all military subjects, only regret that you do not give to the world at large the fruits of your experience. Don't you, Percival?"

"I feel that I was wrong, gentlemen, to waste my time in attempting to make you sensible on points in which, it is now clear to me, you are very defective in knowledge; and, to prevent my making a similar mistake again, I must request that in future you will not honour me with your visits."

"A request, which, had it been made two days before," — (and here Mordaunt looked in a peculiar manner at Miss Melville,) — "I should have acceded to with much more readiness than at present, although it must have deprived me of the advantage of hearing the admirable exordium on military discipline, with which I have this day been favoured." And here he bowed to Mrs. Scuddamore with mock humility.

This impertinence towards a woman, and one, too, whose age entitled her to respect, I could no longer resist from noticing. I was not sorry either; for, being furnished with a plausible excuse for resenting my own private wrongs, while apparently only defending those of a woman. I therefore stood up, and addressing Mr. Percival said, that, "As Mrs. Scuddamore desired a discontinuance of the future visits of himself and his friend, it would be,

I conceived, more agreeable to her to have the present one abridged."

"I do not see what right you have to become the interpreter of the lady's thoughts or wishes," observed Percival, insolently.

"And I," said Mordaunt, "must request you not to meddle in anything that has the slightest reference to me."

"Oh, no, Mr. Herbert!" exclaimed Miss Melville, standing up in evident trepidation, and approaching me.

"Georgina, my dear, be seated; leave these gentlemen to settle their little differences," said Mrs. Scuddamore; "Mr. Herbert has acted precisely as Colonel Scuddamore would have done in a similar case."

"Then I am to understand that you are the champion of this lady?" And Percival bowed to Mrs. Scuddamore, "that you, in short, wish to dictate to me with regard to the length of my visit?"

"Yes," answered I; "I will see no lady treated with rudeness in my presence without marking my disapproval of such conduct."

"You shall hear from me, Sir."

"And from me too," added Mordaunt, and both left the room, bowing to the ladies. "Oh! dear aunt, how dreadful," exclaimed Miss Melville, her beautiful face pale with terror. "Surely you will not allow Mr. Herbert to expose his life about such a trifle."

"As the widow of a brave and distinguished soldier, I cannot advise Mr. Herbert, were he even my own son, to pass over the ungentlemanly conduct of these men."

"No representations, Madam, could induce me to deny these gentlemen the satisfaction they consider they have a right to demand," replied I, flattered by the interest and alarm the lovely girl before me evinced in my favour. I felt that to excite this interest, I would readily risk my life; and the thought of being able at length to prove that a want of courage was not the cause of my having hitherto allowed the marked coldness of my fellow-

collegians to pass unquestioned, filled me with satisfaction. The reflection that I might kill, or be killed, natural to a thinking being, at such a moment, never entered my mind. The weight of a mountain seemed removed from my breast by an opportunity having been afforded me of vindicating my wounded feelings — so long oppressed by a sense of being slighted, if not insulted. To fight, too, in the cause of Mrs. Scuddamore, was like a homage offered to her beautiful niece, and this notion added to my alacrity to meet Percival and Mordaunt.

"I am really gratified, my dear Mr. Herbert, to observe your cheerfulness under present circumstances," said Mrs. Scuddamore. "My brave husband would have approved it, and would have gladly lent his presence as your friend."

The word friend jarred on my ear, by reminding me that I had no one to whom I could appeal as mine, and as this recollection flashed on my mind, I became embarrassed.

"I hope," resumed Mrs. Scuddamore, "that you have some person worthy of confiding in on this occasion. A man brave without being overbearing, or domineering, firm, without being obstinate, polite, without the least obsequiousness — such is the man into whose hands you ought to entrust the arrangement of this affair."

Shame prevented me from avowing that I had no friend. Might it not be received as a tacit acknowledgment that I had not merited one? I said something about not knowing any one possessed of the various qualifications which the lady had named as necessary in the person who was to act as a friend in a duel.

"I do know one," replied Mrs. Scuddamore, "who will, I am sure, at my request, take the whole management of this business into his hands. The person in question is an old brother officer of my husband, placed on half-pay, and living within a mile of Oxford. I will instantly write to him, and he will, I am quite sure, see you, and communicate with the friends chosen by Messrs. Percival and Mordaunt. You shall have the pistols of my

dear husband, which I consider among the most valued of my possessions. I did not think they would ever again be used; but in defence of his widow, and to chastise an impertinence offered to her, I do not believe I am doing wrong in lending them."

It was a curious contrast to witness the perfect coolness with which Mrs. Scuddamore talked this matter over, speaking of pistols with as much indifference as other ladies speak of fans, while her niece, pale and agitated, shuddered whenever the name of these murderous instruments was pronounced, and evinced an involuntary horror that might have led even a less vain man than me to imagine that she took a more than ordinary interest in his safety. I took my leave, not however without receiving particular and repeated injunctions from Mrs. Scuddamore, to avoid being placed with my back to the horizon, when on the ground, and not to wear a light coloured waistcoat. On entering college, I found a challenge from Percival, and another from Mordaunt, desiring me to name a friend who could arrange with the gentlemen they had selected, where and when the meeting was to take place. I felt certain that both my antagonists had anticipated, with some degree of satisfaction, the difficulty in which I should be placed to find a friend, while they, living in habits of intimacy with their fellow-collegians, might choose from a number the individual who was to witness their killing, or being killed. I sat down and wrote a letter to my mother, to be sent her in case I fell. With no less than two duels on my hands, the chances of this catastrophe were against me, and as this fact occurred to me, I became conscious of an emotion as new as it was strange. It was not fear. No, not a shade of that entered in my feelings, but the thought that I might never more see my poor mother, never behold another day, sobered me, and opened a spring of tenderness towards my parent that brought a moisture to my eyes, and would have flooded hers, had they perceived the expressions it prompted.

CHAPTER VI.

How many thoughts crowd into the mind when a human being is menaced with the possibility of a sudden summons to another world! — This rush of thoughts becomes greatly increased, when he who experiences it is in the full vigour of youth and health, when the prospects of life are but opening to him, and Hope, the Syren, points to future happiness, and whispers honeyed words. To feel the heart throbbing high, the young blood flowing swiftly through the veins, promising lengthened years, yet to know that in a few hours all may be over — that this animated frame may be but as a clod of common earth to be quickly consigned to its native clay, to be shut in for ever from the light of day, the breath of summer, to become food for the worm, is indeed an appalling thought to all, but how much more especially to one who had never before contemplated death, but as an event so distant, that no definite notion had been formed of it, no dread entertained. Neglected duties, time misspent, and oh! most terrible of all thoughts, the Almighty forgotten until one may be summoned to *His* dread presence, rise up in fearful array, filling the heart with terror of that "bourne whence no traveller returns," and of which the profound mystery, may, in a few fast fleeting hours be solved! And yet but a short time before, I had felt satisfaction in the anticipation of these duels. Not from a desire of vengeance on my adversaries, not from a vainglorious spirit, but simply and solely, from a desire of vindicating myself from the slights I had experienced, without sacrificing my pride by avowing my sense of them. How may a few hours, nay more, a few minutes, change the feelings! The revolution in mine had been effected by writing

to my mother. I could not take a farewell of her that might be eternal, without sentiments of natural affection being awakened, which once aroused, give rise to serious reflections and sadness. The written words of adieu, as they marked my paper, dimmed my eyes with tears; and as I brushed them hastily away, I was glad that my door, being locked, no intruder could enter to be a spy on my deep emotion, and probably to misjudge its cause, attributing that to want of courage, which in truth originated in filial affection. My letter concluded, I placed it in my desk, and had only done so, when a knock at my door announced a visitor. When admitted, a tall thin elderly man, with scanty locks, whitened by time, stood before me — he wore a black stock, a blue coat, and military boots. "Your name, I believe Sir, is Herbert," said he. I bowed assent, and requested him to be seated.

"I have called on you by desire of Mrs. Scuddamore to offer my services as a friend in a duel which I understand is to be the consequence of some words which passed between you and two of your fellow-collegians. As an old soldier I have had some little experience in such affairs, and will gladly make it available to you, Mrs. Scuddamore having expressed to me the interest she feels for you."

I bowed my thanks, and said something about my gratitude to that lady.

"Yes, Sir, she deserves respect and esteem, not only as the widow of one of the bravest and most honourable of men, but as a lady who joins to all the virtue and goodness of her sex, all the heroic courage and high sense of honour that appertains to the most distinguished of ours. 'I tell you, Captain Brady,' said she to me, 'that had you not been within reach to go out with this young man, I do believe I would have assumed male attire, put on for the nonce the military undress of your gallant colonel, my ever-to-be-lamented husband, and gone to the ground with him.'

"And she would have done it, Sir, for such is her sense of honour, that she could not bear to have you left unprovided with a friend on such an occasion."

All this was spoken with the utmost gravity, and with a strong Hibernian accent, and it was plain that Captain Brady, though he saw little to wonder at, saw much to admire in the military ardour of the widow of his colonel. I wrote a few lines to Messrs. Percival and Mordaunt, to name Captain Brady as the friend who would be ready to meet theirs, to arrange time and place for our rencontre; and having despatched my notes, we awaited the result. During the time that intervened, my new acquaintance informed me that his health having suffered from several wounds received in action, he had been compelled to retire on half-pay, and had selected the vicinity of Oxford solely for the purpose of being near Mrs. Scuddamore, in order, to be at all times ready to receive her commands.

"There was not an officer in her husband's regiment, Sir," continued he, "who would not have been glad to consider himself as much under *her* command, as they had been proud to serve under that of their gallant colonel, for she was as much adored in the regiment, as he was beloved and respected. She was the mother of the young officers, Sir, their monitress and adviser; and the sister and friend of the old. The very private soldiers worshipped her, while the dread of incurring her bad opinion, preserved their wives from the levity and bad conduct which too often marks the soldier's wives. She established schools for the girls, over which she presided; while the colonel personally superintended those for the men and boys, and she engaged every officer's wife to follow her good example; forming a little circle of female society in the regiment, remarkable for decorum, agreeability, and good nature. Such, Sir, was Mrs. Scuddamore. No wonder, then, that all who had opportunities of know-

ing her, should esteem and reverence her, and be ready, like me, to fulfil her commands."

The friends of Messrs. Percival and Mordaunt, having now come to arrange preliminaries with Captain Brady, he saw them in another room. They at first, as I afterwards learned, sought to banter the old soldier, and proposed conditions to which he would not accede, but they soon discovered that he was not a man to be imposed on; and when the arrangements for my double duel were completed, he astonished the gentlemen who acted for Percival and Mordaunt, by informing them that when my affairs were settled, he must demand satisfaction from both those individuals, for the want of respect evinced towards the widow of his late chief by them. It was in vain that the seconds declared that their friends, having had no disagreement with Captain Brady, they could not be called on to fight with him; he persisted in stating, that a want of respect towards the wife of his colonel, was the greatest offence that could be offered to him, and that he must receive the *amende honorable* for it.

I went to the ground, accompanied by Captain Brady, and an old brother in arms of his, a Captain Collyer, who lived with him. The distance was measured, I was placed opposite my adversary, Mr. Percival; Mr. Mordaunt being at a little distance, ready to take his place when I had done with his friend. We were to fire at a signal given by our seconds. My shot took away a corner of the skirt of Mr. Percival's coat, while his went through the crown of my hat, within an inch of my head. My adversary, being the challenger, was asked if he were satisfied, and having answered in the affirmative, an answer, I believe, occasioned by the certainty that he was afterwards to stand a shot from Captain Brady, we bowed to each other, and Mr. Mordaunt took the place of Percival. The same ceremony was gone through. We fired, — I was untouched, but my adversary fell on the earth. For a few moments I was horror-struck. I believed he was dead,

or dying, and I rushed up to the spot where he was lying, his second and Percival supporting him. He was pale as death, but when his coat and waistcoat were opened, it was found that my ball had merely grazed the skin of his right side, over the ribs, and passed out through his garments behind, inflicting only a skin wound, which, however, dyed his clothes with blood. His fall was, I suppose, occasioned by the shock. One thing, however, was certain, which was, that he believed himself mortally wounded, nor could the assertions to the contrary made by his friends lessen his alarm.

"I know something of these matters, young gentleman," said Captain Brady, "and I can assure you your wound is only a scratch, of which, in a couple of days, you will bear scarcely a mark. I had hoped, that if you are now satisfied with regard to Mr. Herbert, you would, on the spot, afford me the satisfaction I demand, and so have the business over at once. If, however, you prefer it, I shall be at your service to-morrow, or next day."

The disconsolate countenance of Mr. Mordaunt was almost ludicrous. He shook his head, and pronounced with a tragic air,

"They jest at scars who never felt a wound."

"That cannot apply to me, Sir," replied Captain Brady, angrily, "for I have no less than fourteen wounds on my body, received in the service of my country, and three balls, which never could be extracted. But to conclude, are you satisfied with Mr. Herbert, or do you wish another shot?"

"I am quite satisfied, Sir, perfectly so; and as I have given you no offence, I really think it unreasonable that I should be expected to fight again."

"If you will apologize, that is, write a proper letter to ask pardon of the lady whom you offended by your *persiflage*, I will not insist on your fighting."

"I have no objection," was the reply, the speaker making wry faces and sundry contortions, indicative of the uneasiness he was suffering from his wound. "I will dictate the apology, Sir," resumed Captain Brady, "and my second as well as yours, will add their signatures to it."

"Hang it, Mordaunt! don't let the Captain carry it all his own way. Stand another shot, man. Your wound is only skin deep."

"Why should I stand another shot, Percival, when I am satisfied?"

"You ought to consult your second. You placed your honour in his hands, and should abide by his decision."

The second was a good-tempered, good-natured young man, and, moreover, he saw that Mordaunt had enough of fighting, so he gave it as his opinion "that Mr. Mordaunt, having been wounded, need not be expected to fight again, and that an apology to a lady, was perfectly consistent with the laws of honour;" a decision that evidently afforded perfect satisfaction to Mr. Mordaunt.

"You, I presume, Sir," said Captain Brady, addressing Mr. Percival, "will have no objection to our settling our quarrel at once."

"Not the least, Sir; the sooner the better."

The ground was again measured, the signal given, the adversaries fired. Captain Brady was not touched, but Mr. Percival had two of the fingers of his right hand shot off, when the seconds interfered, and would not allow another shot to be exchanged, as Percival proposed, after having wrapped his hand in his handkerchief with perfect *sang froid*. It was agreed on the spot, that to prevent the consequences which a knowledge of the duels would inevitably entail on collegians, the whole affair was to be kept a secret, and the bursting of a gun was to be alleged as the cause of the loss of Percival's fingers.

"But *my* wound; how is that to be explained?" inquired Mordaunt.

"It can only be discovered by your washer-woman," replied Captain Brady, "who can be told it was the scratch of a pin:" a remark which occasioned considerable hilarity in all save him at whom it was levelled. The apology was written by Captain Brady, signed by Mordaunt, and attested by his second and Captain Collyer.

"And now, young gentleman," said the worthy Irishman to me, "accept the offered friendship of an old soldier. You have conducted yourself all through this affair as an honourable and brave man, who is worthy of esteem."

And so saying, he took his departure, leaving me more self-satisfied than I had been for years, in the consciousness of having vindicated my honour.

Nor was I unmindful of the effect likely to be produced on the mind of Miss Melville by this duel. Women are prone to think favourably of him who is ready to resent any slight offered to them, and if she betrayed so much interest for my safety before the duel, might I not anticipate a kind reception when I again presented myself to her, certain as I felt that Captain Brady would not omit anything in the narration of the circumstance that could tend to raise me in the estimation of both ladies. Yes, I would certainly call on them that evening, to receive the meed of their approval.

CHAPTER VII.

FILLED with pleasurable anticipations of my coming interview with Mrs. Scuddamore and her beautiful neice, I entered my room, and found a letter in an unknown hand, which had arrived while I had been absent. It contained intelligence of the sudden death of Mr. Trevyllan, which had occurred the preceding morning, and required my presence in town for the opening of the will.

How strange and unfathomable is the heart of man! My first thought on reading the letter was regret at being compelled to leave Oxford without seeing Miss Melville; without beholding her bright eyes sparkle, and her fair cheek suffused with blushes of pleasure at our meeting, while the duel, which had, I felt certain, caused her the utmost alarm and anxiety, was still so recent, and fresh in her memory. I had looked forward to a meeting at the present time with such a conviction, that with so artless a nature as hers, it would draw forth some unconscious and involuntary demonstrations of the secret preference which I hoped I had awakened in her heart, that I could not abandon the self-promised pleasure without great disappointment and regret: and yet, unfeeling as this may appear, I was, nevertheless, shocked, if not grieved, at the news just received. There is something in the sudden death of one with whom we have been for years living in habits of intimacy, that produces a strong impression on the mind, — and I felt this; for, although the deceased was not a person to awaken affection, or to experience sympathy, nevertheless, he had been invariably kind to me; and, in the gratitude which his good nature created, I was disposed to forget the dif-

ferent traits in his character which had so often displeased, ay, and worse, which had produced so bad an effect on my own mind, and, by so doing, had entailed annoyances on me, the result of which might influence my destiny through life.

I notified the necessity of my departure to the proper authority, and set out immediately for London. I was received with such marked obsequiousness by the two upper servants of the late Mr. Trevyllan, that it instantly struck me that they supposed I was left heir to his property. Their alacrity to wait on me, their desire to anticipate my wants and wishes was evident, and their affected regret for their late master was so ill played, that no one could be imposed on by it. It is true, they assumed a lugubrious countenance and tone of voice when they spoke of their poor master, but no semblance of a tear moistened their eyes, no remembered acts of generosity or goodness on his part loosened their tongues to praise him, now that he was no more, and his mortal remains were left unattended, unregarded, in the solitary chamber of death, while they devoted all their thoughts and care to propitiate him whom they believed would succeed to his property.

"Two more rapacious harpies I have never encountered than the two upper servants of my poor friend," said Mr. Vise, one of the executors to me, the day of my arrival. "I do believe they concealed his death several hours from me, in order to gain time to rob him before I could place the seals on his effects. I have been compelled several times to reprove their neglect of his remains. Ah! Mr. Herbert, if the life of an old bachelor be a cheerless and dreary one, the death-bed is an awful scene. Left to the tender mercies of hirelings, careless of his comfort now when they know he can never more reprehend or punish their neglect: no tender partner of his life to smoothe his pillow, and watch his every glance: no affectionate son, no fond and duteous daughter to hover round the dying bed, to wipe the moisture from

his brow, to lift the cup to his lip: no faltering voice, tremulous from affection, to read the word of God, or to pray: no tender hand to close his eyes: but, in the place of those dear relatives, paid menials, who served but for hire, and who wait but for death, for which they are impatient, in order to plunder; who mock the dead, who can no longer deter them from indulging in their rapaciousness and cupidity, and who long to enjoy unmolested the fruits of their dishonesty. These servants declare, that, finding their late master had not rang his bell in the morning, as usual, they had gone to his chamber, where they found him dead. Now, the usual hour of my poor friend's ringing his bell was eight in the morning, and supposing that they did not enter his room until ten o'clock, two hours after the usual hour of his awaking, how came it that they called in no physican until half-past twelve o'clock, two hours after?

"Dr. Morrington informed me that he was entering his carriage precisely at half-past twelve, when Turner, the butler of Mr. Trevyllan, came to summon him to his master, whom he stated he had just discovered, to all appearance, lifeless in his bed. This looks very suspicious, does it not? and engenders various vague and painful surmises in my mind. Who knows, but that if our poor friend had been attended to in time, he might have been saved! It is most painful to think what might have occurred in his last hours, left solely in the hands of these persons. Poor Trevyllan, too, was very imprudent. He often boasted to me of his sagacity in securing the services of his domestics for much less wages than are generally given, by holding out to them the prospect of being well provided for at his death; and I have seen him laugh in the anticipation of their disappointment when the contents of his will should be made known, and that they found he had cheated their hopes. I find that several boxes were removed from the house at six o'clock the morning of his death, that is, four hours before, as they state, they were

aware of that event. I have sent to the coroner, in order that an inquest may be held, and a strict investigation be gone into, for I cannot divest my mind of very painful suspicinos."

The inquest was held, and in the investigation it came out, that the housemaid heard her master's bell ring at about twelve o'clock at night, he having gone to bed at eleven. She was exact about the hour she heard the bell ring, for she had only just got into bed, having remained up later than usual to do some needle-work for herself, and she heard the house-clock strike twelve, four or five minutes before. Knowing that her master's night-bell rang into the butler's room, she concluded he would hear, and attend to it, but mentioned the circumstance next morning to the housekeeper, who said she must be mistaken, for that in her room, which was very near Mr. Trevyllan's, she heard no bell.

The housekeeper appeared angry when she persisted in saying, she had positively heard the bell. The kitchen-maid told the housemaid that when she came down stairs at six o'clock in the morning she found a hackney-coach at the hall-door, nearly filled with chests and boxes, into which a man, whose face she did not see, he was so wrapped up, got, and the coach was hurriedly driven off when she appeared at the door.

The kitchen-maid, alarmed, looked around the house to see if anything was wrong, or missing, met the housekeeper on the stairs, to whom she communicated the circumstance, as also her intention of calling the butler; but was told by the housekeeper to do no such thing, and to mind her own business. The housekeeper never came down stairs before eight o'clock, but that particular day she was down at six. The butler did not make his appearance until nine o'clock, nor was the death of Mr. Trevyllan made known in the house until twelve. Several times previously to that hour, she, when in the front area, had seen the butler going backwards and forwards through the hall door

with a large cloak on, beneath which he seemed to have some bulky packages. The housemaid stated, that Mr. Trevyllan's breakfast was always served at nine o'clock, but on that morning no preparation for breakfast had been made; and on her remarking this fact to the housekeeper, at about half-past nine, that person had said, "True, I suppose Mr. Turner has forgotten it;" and she went herself to the butler's pantry, and placed the breakfast things ready on the tray — a thing which she, the housemaid, had never before seen her do.

The *autopsie* having taken place, it was declared that Mr. Trevyllan had died of apoplexy; and the verdict of the jury was, that suspicious circumstances having occurred, implicating the housekeeper and butler with having concealed their master's death for several hours after they must have been cognizant of that fact, and having sent packages secretly out of the house, it was advisable they should be taken into custody, and retained until a strict examination of the property, to be compared with the inventories, should prove whether or not any portion of it was deficient. It was found that the inventories given up by Turner and the housekeeper by no means corresponded with those produced by Mr. Vise, the executor, although it was stated on the back of each of these last, that the butler and housekeeper had duplicates of them. It appeared that the persons were not aware of the existence of these duplicates until their production, and had destroyed the original ones, causing false inventories to be drawn up, which omitted the various articles of value, to a very large amount, which they had from time to time abstracted, with the intention of possessing themselves of, but which they had kept ready packed in the house, lest at any time the articles should be missed, but which they had sent away when they believed themselves safe from discovery, by the death of their master; little dreaming that he had guarded against their cupidity.

They were taken into custody; a reward was offered by Mr. Vise in the public papers to the hackney-coachman who had conveyed away the boxes from Mr. Trevyllan's door on the morning in puestion. The promised reward brought the coachman to claim it, and led to the discovery of all the stolen property, worth several hundred pounds, which was restored to Mr. Vise. The two culprits were lodged in prison, to await their trial; and now the will was opened. A bequest of five thousand pounds to Mr. Vise; one of double that sum, as well as his plate, linen, china, glass, and books, to me; and the rest of his fortune, a very large one, to public charities, comprised the contents. His house, also, was bequeathed to me.

Thus died a man whose whole life had been passed in a total and reckless disregard of his fellow-men, of whom he judged so uncharitably as to believe that all who were kind and generous, were destitute of common sense, and the selfish and unfeeling alone were wise.

"How poor Trevyllan would have enjoyed his two unworthy servants' having been caught in the meshes of the net which their own cupidity had wrought," said Mr. Vise; "this would have been deemed by him an illustration of his favourite theory, that most persons, and more especially servants, miss no opportunity of defrauding whenever they think they can do so with impunity."

The last solemn duties offered to the dead being over, I was on the point of returning to Oxford, leaving Mr. Vise to arrange the affairs connected with the bequest to me from Mr. Trevyllan, when a letter from Mrs. Scuddamore informed me, that owing to the weakness and imprudence of my late adversary, Mr. Mordaunt, the two duels had been made known, and the utmost commotion in the college had been the consequence. That foolish young man, persisting in believing his wound to be a dangerous one, had, *malgre* the advice, nay the entreaties of his

friend Percival and the seconds, sent for a surgeon, and revealed to him not only the wound, but the cause. The surgeon happened to be addicted to gossipping. He told it to some half dozen friends, who repeated it to as many more; and the result was, that after a few days the heads of the college became acquainted with the affair, instituted strict inquiries into it—got at the whole truth — and, desirous to prevent for the future similar events, had decided on the expulsion of the duellists from college.

"You had better remain in London for the present," wrote Mrs. Scuddamore; "for, as it is known your absence has been caused by the death of your guardian, it will not tell against you. If the affair takes a more favourable turn, and that only rustication should be the punishment, you can come back to receive the sentence. The old fograms of a college take a very different view of such matters from what military men — and I almost consider myself one — do. You have behaved like a young man of spirit, and even should you be expelled college, your character will be in no way injured by it; so do not let your spirits be affected. Captain Brady, than whom a more honourable man nor a braver soldier does not exist, highly approves your conduct; and the approval of such a man may well console you for the censure of a few old pedagogues, ignorant of the ways of the world, and of the necessity of a young man maintaining a high reputation for moral and physical courage."

Not a word was said of her niece. She was not even included in a simple "we," which often implies so much. Mrs. Scuddamore had either intentionally omitted naming her niece, or had wholly forgotten her in the earnestness of her belief, that *her* opinion, and that of Captain Brady were all that interested me.

Mr. Vise advised me to place the ten thousand pounds bequeathed me by Mr. Trevyllan, in the funds; to dispose of the house, and invest the produce in the same security; and to sell

the extra plate, reserving as much as I might hereafter require for my own use, as also the pictures and library; the sale of all which would add considerably to my fortune.

This worthy man, with whom I had been acquainted ever since my first arrival from Wales, had always treated me with the greatest kindness; and on this occasion had manifested so warm an interest in my welfare, and taken so active a part in arranging my pecuniary concerns, that I could not doubt the sincerity of the friendship he professed. I made him acquainted with all that had occurred at Oxford; and he urged me so strenuously to return there, alleging that my protracted absence could not fail to prejudice my case, that I decided on adopting his advice; and after a fortnight's *sejour* in London, I returned to college. That fortnight's absence had been turned to account against me.

My first visit was to Mrs. Scuddamore, who received me with a cold civility that ill accorded with her former kindness, and with the cordiality of the letter I had received from her in London. I had heard the sound of retreating footsteps, and had caught a glimpse of white drapery, ere a door of the drawing-room, that opened on back stairs, had closed, and I instantly concluded that Miss Melville had hastily withdrawn on my being announced. This struck me as an unfavourable omen, and a presentiment of evil glanced through my mind, which was not a little increased by the gravity of Mrs. Scuddamore's demeanour, and the formality of her manner. I ventured to inquire after the health of her niece, and was answered that she was perfectly well.

"May I not hope for the pleasure of seeing Miss Melville?" asked I, in considerable trepidation.

"To be candid with you, Mr. Herbert," replied the lady, "circumstances have occurred since your departure, which render it advisable that your visits here should be discontinued. My brother has accepted proposals for our niece, of so advantageous a nature, that any thing which might interfere with the fulfilment

of her engagements must be avoided. Your being on bad terms with the gentleman who is to be her husband, would naturally render your presence here disagreeable to him, and embarrassing to her; so you must excuse me for requesting that this may be your last visit here."

"May I inquire, Madam, whether anything injurious to my character, has led to your adopting this line of conduct? If so, pray furnish me with an opportunity of justifying myself; for, it would be indeed very painful to me to lose your good opinion."

"My knowledge of you, Mr. Herbert, is so slight, that I had hardly formed an opinion, except in the affair of the duel, when I certainly think you behaved perfectly well, and so I shall always say, whenever the subject is referred to in my presence; and now I will not detain you any longer, as I expect a person on business."

And Mrs. Scuddamore literally bowed me out of the room. My pride, my delicacy, and above all my deep admiration of Miss Melville, made me revolt at this unexpected and unhandsome treatment. Wounded to the quick, I heartily wished that I could avenge my mortification on some one; but to whom could I turn? I determined to pay a visit to Captain Brady, and see if he, too, were changed, or, at least, whether I could not discover through him, what had led to the alteration in Mrs. Scuddamore. He received me in a friendly manner, informed me that the person to whom Miss Melville was to be married in a short time, was no other than Mr. Mordaunt, who, being his own master and possessed of a good fortune, had proposed for her hand, and her uncle had immediately accepted the proposal. "The young lady has no fortune," said he; "her aunt and uncle have nothing to leave her, and, as she had no objection to the gentleman, the match has been arranged."

"But is it quite certain that she has no objection?" demanded I, remembering the agitation and anxiety she had betrayed

on the occasion of the misunderstanding between Percival, Mordaunt, and myself; and which, to confess the truth, I had attributed wholly to her interest for me."

"Yes, young gentleman; when referred to, she positively declared that she felt a preference for Mr. Mordaunt from her first interview with him, and that it was this preference which led to her alarm and anxiety on the occasion of the quarrel. I must acknowledge," added the old soldier, "that I did not expect that a fine young girl, and, moreover, the niece of Mrs. Scuddamore, would have accepted the hand of a man, who certainly in my opinion is very deficient in courage; but women are strange creatures, Mr. Herbert, and, although Mrs. Scuddamore is aware of the want of courage of Mr. Mordaunt, she overlooks it, for the sake of securing a provision for her orphan niece: which conduct on her part, has, I confess, much surprised and disappointed me."

Shocked and disgusted at the mercenary motives of the aunt, and the duplicity of the niece, (for of duplicity I could not acquit her, although, perhaps, had I accused myself of vanity, instead of her of duplicity, I should be nearer the truth,) I named them no more, but requested Captain Brady to inform me, whether anything injurious to my honour had been said during my absence.

"Why, to be frank with you," replied he, "it has been whispered about, that you had been unpopular ever since you entered college; that at school you were likewise disliked and avoided, yet that you never evinced any symptom of surprise, or betrayed any desire to resent this general avoidance. It has been said, that it was not to resent any impertinence offered to Mrs. Scuddamore, but to avenge the long and repeated slights pointed at yourself, that you fought two duels; and this rumour has totally changed the favourable light in which the affair was previously viewed by impartial people. I can, however, give you

no clue whatever, to fix this report on any particular person; and were you to charge any one with it, and so get into another duel, so far from serving yourself, you would inevitably injure your cause, and acquire the reputation of a revengeful and bad-hearted man. Be therefore advised by me, and let the matter drop, unless any offence be offered you."

CHAPTER VIII.

No sooner was my return to Oxford notified, than I was informed that the duels in which I had been engaged, and which I had by my insulting conduct towards Messrs. Percival and Mordaunt provoked and forced them into, had been made the subject of a grave investigation; the result of which was, that it was decided, that I was to be severely reprimanded, and rusticated for a year.

It had not been taken into consideration that I was the challenged, and not the challenger; consequently, while my adversaries got off with a reprimand, my punishment was much more severe, and a sense of its injustice greatly irritated me, although I experienced but little regret at leaving college, and determined on returning to it no more. The independence secured to me by Mr. Trevyllan would have led to this decision, even had I not been rusticated, for I felt no inclination towards any of the learned professions, for which a long residence in college is necessary, and rather looked to the pleasures of a tranquil home in Wales, among my native hills, and with my favourite books, than to a continuance in the busy scenes of life, for which I had no predilection. I proceeded to arrange my affairs at Oxford, and before I left it, paid one more visit to Captain Brady. He received me kindly, was evidently somewhat shocked at the cavalier treatment I had met with at the hands of his friend Mrs. Scuddamore, although he attempted to mitigate it, by pleading in excuse for it the dependent state of her fair niece, for whom she was anxious to secure a good marriage. Again I questioned him as to whether Miss Melville's own feelings were interested in the al-

liance now on the eve of being formed; and he assured me, that he knew for a certainty, that the young lady had acknowledged to her aunt, that her happiness depended on it. Mrs. Scuddamore had, like me, imagined, that the anxiety betrayed by her niece, on the occasion of the scene between Messrs. Percival and Mordaunt, and myself, had originated in a partiality on her part, to me; and had questioned her closely on this subject, when she avowed that all her anxiety had been for Mr. Mordaunt, and that her appealing looks to me were meant to dissuade me from injuring him. Even when informed of the pusillanimity he had evinced on the ground, ("and I thought," continued the brave Hibernian, "it was my duty to state the fact,") so far from degrading him in her opinion, it seemed positively to endear him to her more, and, when he had solicited her hand, she confessed that his prudence, as she chose to term what I call by another name, would be the best guarantee for her future happiness, as it would deter him from duels. "I confess," resumed Captain Brady, "that the young lady has considerably lowered herself in my estimation. The niece too of a lady with such elevated, and I may say, soldier-like opinions on the point of honour! Indeed, I believe I may venture to say, that Mrs. Scuddamore's own notions are wholly at variance with those of her niece on the subject; but money, my dear Sir, and the prospect of a good settlement for that young person, have silenced her scruples. Her brother too, is an advocate for the match; persons of *his* profession entertaining a widely different notion on honour and courage, to those of mine."

Being now convinced that my vanity had misled me, with regard to the imagined partiality of Miss Melville for my unworthy self, my sense of disappointment became considerably abated; so true it is that self-love is generally, if not always, the basis on which male attachments are founded. I could no longer respect a woman who could love a man wanting in courage; and even her

beauty, which had so captivated me, faded away from my mind from the moment I had acquired the conviction that her preference was awarded to another.

I returned to London after three days' *sejour* in Oxford, fully determined to see Alma Mater no more, and with a heart as ready to be warmed by a new flame as if the recent one had never been kindled.

The morning after my arrival in town, I received a letter informing me that my mother had been taken suddenly and dangerously ill, and urging me to hasten to her with all possible speed. I set out for Wales within half an hour after the receipt of this letter, my filial tenderness excited into a more vigorous action by the dread of losing one to whom my heart turned with greater affection from its recent disappointment. At one moment I pictured her to myself insensible—perhaps dead—and all her past fondness arose up to awaken bitter self-reproach for having consented to so long a separation from her. More firmness on my part, must have won Mr. Trevyllan's consent to my visiting her in the vacations; yet I had not sought to overcome his objections, but had let year after year pass away without seeing my only parent; and now—I might arrive too late for that happiness, might never again hear that low sweet voice, never behold those dark and loving eyes fixed fondly on mine, never receive the maternal blessing for which my heart pined. But the mind of man, and more especially while he is still young, is ever prone to turn from painful thoughts. I endeavoured to cast mine from me, and Hope whispered that I might still find my mother alive—perhaps out of danger. I pictured to myself her joy at seeing me, her words of welcome, the gentle pressure of her delicate arms, and the words of love, interrupted by kisses, dropping from her lips like dew on a parched flower. I stopped not on the road, even for food, but hurried on, every thought a prayer for the prolongation of a life grown within the last few hours dearer

to me than mine own. How had I lived apart from her so long? how denied myself the happiness of being near her? were questions continually suggesting themselves to my mind, and never unaccompanied by self-reproach. The journey seemed interminable, so great was my impatience to reach home; and as the carriage flew past the hills, trees, and mountains, with a velocity that almost made me giddy, I urged the astonished postillion to redouble his speed, promising him gold for a compliance with my wishes. I longed for evening to mark how far I had progressed, yet when twilight with its soft grey mantle had veiled the surrounding scenery, rendering every object indistinct, I wished the moon to rise, that I might behold the distant country, and judge how far I had proceeded. The sighing of the wind among the trees filled me with a sadness never before experienced. It sounded like the voices of departed spirits, and seemed to my prophetic soul as a warning that she who I was hastening to was already among them—that I should arrive too late to receive her blessing. The moon at length arose in unclouded splendour casting her silvery radiance over the grand and wild country through which I was hurrying. How cold, how stern, seemed the glance of this bright luminary, when I gazed with aching eyes on her disk, as if to read on its shining face a confirmation of my hopes or fears! I thought that perhaps at that moment its rays might be falling on the couch of my mother. Oh! why was it not given me to know whether her eyes could still view them, whether I had yet that truest and most tender friend that God bestows on man — a mother? A thousand superstitious thoughts passed through my mind, weakened as it was by anxiety and want of sustenance. When a dark cloud passed over the moon, I shuddered lest it should be an omen of the shroud that covers the dead; and when it floated away, leaving the glorious orb of night more refulgent than before, my spirits brightened with hope, until another cloud veiled it, and awakened new dread. I believe

the postillions took me for a maniac, and in truth I more resembled one than a sane person, by my reiterated demands for increased speed, when, as they frequently assured me, they were driving at a pace that threatened danger to their horses and vehicle, if not to their lives. When day dawned, and an increased cold, which ever is felt when morning chases night away, announced the fact, a chill like that of the grave stole over me. Cloud after cloud faded away, leaving a sober grey more cheerless far than the moonlight had been. Another day had come, but oh! was *she* who filled all my thoughts still in life to behold it? Was *she*, like me, impatiently counting the hours, and trembling lest she should go hence before I could arrive?

How strange and unfathomable is the heart of man! Even while a prey to the deepest anxiety, tremblingly alive to fears that it was agony little less than a confirmation of their worst whispers to endure, memory brought before me a thousand proofs of maternal tenderness, the recollection of which had long slumbered in my heart, but which now awoke with a vividness that added torture to my self-accusations for having forgotten them. Who had I met in that cold and glittering world, which I had been so desirous to enter, that I consented to leave my mother's side, to love me as she had done, nay to love me at all. Had I not found all hearts closed against me? and could I count on the affection of a human being save herself? The faults, which had deterred others from liking me, had not weakened her attachment. No; the heart of a mother, like the Divinity that created it, can alone pardon the errors of her children, and look with pitying tenderness on their sins.

My burning temples throbbed with pain—my very heart ached from the force of remorse, as these bitter thoughts passed through my mind; and many, and firm were the resolves I made, that if the Almighty deigned to listen to my prayers, and to accord me a prolongation of the life of my sole parent, I would leave her no

more. I would watch over her as tenderly as ever mother did over an only child; I would share her regret for my father; would listen with interest to her stories of that happy past connected with him; in short, I would live henceforth for her, and for her only, to atone for the neglect for which my conscience had within the last two days so severely accused me. Alas! we know not the depth of our affection for those dear to us, until we are in danger of losing them, or until they are gone from us for ever!

I had reached a village within about ten miles of my home, proceeding still with undiminished velocity, when the post-chaise broke down, and I received some severe contusions when thrown from it. My impatience at this delay almost maddened me; and when it was found that the carriage could not be repaired sufficiently to enable me to proceed in it for several hours, I determined to continue my route on horseback. To this project the obstinate postillion would not yield assent. His poor horses, he said, and swore, were already half dead, from the speed I had insisted on his using; and he would not allow me to ride one of them, were I even to pay him the value of both.

No horse could be had in the miserable little hamlet close to which this untoward accident occurred, and, half distracted, I determined to proceed on foot to my home, after having paid the sulky post-boy his extravagant demand for the horses and repairs of the chaise. I could procure no guide to accompany me, so was compelled to set out alone, leaving my luggage in the village ale-house.

Never shall I forget that night! An unusual stillness prevailed — unbroken, save by the occasional bark of some cottager's dog, or the cry of some bird of night. Scarcely a breeze moved the leaves of the high trees, whose long shadows fell like giants across the road, in some parts of it so close as to exclude the light. I hurried on through this solitude, my own footsteps sounding so loud as to startle me, and the beating of my heart making itself

audible. Sometimes a low sighing, or moaning of the heavy branches of the trees, moved by an occasional gust of wind rushing down through some deep ravine from the mountains, struck my ear with so sad a sound, that my superstitious forebodings connected it with a supernatural warning of the danger of my mother, and I would hurry on more rapidly than before, until breathless, and exhausted, I was compelled to rest for a few minutes. These fitful gusts of the night wind, followed again by a long stillness, had something so inexpressibly solemn and imposing in them, that they made me shudder; and when some mountain torrent rushed down the precipitous path it had formed for itself, leaping wildly from crag to crag, and dashing its white foam around, I felt as if it were some mysterious agent instinct with power, from which I wished to escape, and again I hurried on until out of hearing of its deafening noise. Then, blaming my own unmanly weakness, I would turn back for a moment to behold the cataract rushing madly along, now hidden for a moment by the dark and funeral mountain pines, and the next instant, breaking into light, its white masses like huge avalanches of snow falling from some Alpine height into the valley beneath, with the sound of a mighty flood, and angry with myself for even the momentary delay, I would resume my rapid pace, while the fresh mountain air failed to cool my fevered brow, or burning lip.

At length the spire of the village church, near my home, became visible, its little vane shining brightly in the moonlight. Often, in the days of my childhood, had it guided my path home from the rambles I delighted in, and now, weary and fainting, I hailed it with an emotion that brought tears into my eyes. I trembled violently as I approached the house. I longed, yet I dreaded to pass its threshold — to know my fate. All my future happiness seemed to hang on the answer that awaited the question my tremulous lips refused to utter—"Have I still a mother?"

A deathlike silence reigned around. The garden gate was unlatched, and I stealthily entered it, and passing through parterres of flowers that looked snowy white beneath the moon-beams, and whose fragrance filled the air, I approached the door, lifted the latch, hurried through the hall and into my mother's chamber. There reclined on her bed, the curtains drawn aside, and four large waxen candles throwing their flickering light on her pallid face, I beheld the dead. — One cry escaped my agonized breast, and I fell to the ground as if bereft of life.

CHAPTER IX.

When I recovered consciousness, I found myself laid on a bed to which I had been removed while insensible, the old and faithful attendant of my mother, watching over me. The sight of her melted my heart, so associated was she with the days of my childhood, and with that dear mother no longer a denizen of earth. I wept long and uninterrupted, for the good Mrs. Burnet sought not to check my tears. Indeed her own fell fast, for fondly devoted to her deceased mistress, her grief at losing her was profound. She related to me every particular of the sudden and fatal illness that had snatched my mother from life. A brain fever, originating in a neglected cold, in four days, had left me an orphan.

"Oh! Sir," said Mrs. Burnet, "how often did my dear departed mistress demand you in her delirium — how frequently press her pillow in her arms, and bless it, believing she held you. Never was there so doting a mother, yet, how unselfish was her love! 'I would give worlds to have my son with me, my good Burnet,' has she often said, 'but my grief, which has now become a part of myself, would depress his spirits, and destroy that elasticity of mind, and that cheerfulness which appertains to the season of youth, and that I could not bear to witness. When he comes, and oh! how I long for that hour, I must put a constraint on my feelings, and conceal my grief for the dead, for the sake of the living.' "

And this was the mother I had so blamably acquiesced in remaining absent from, while she, longing to behold me, had sacrificed her own wishes in her desire that my cheerfulness

should not receive even a temporary cheek. Oh! what in this cold and busy world, can be compared to a mother's heart, unless it be that fabled bird that is said to open its breast to feed its young from the spring that supports its own life, which it readily yields for the preservation of its offspring!

Mrs. Burnet forced me to take some sustenance, making my admission to the chamber of death the condition of my yielding to her wishes on this point, and on sleeping a few hours before I visited it. She administered a narcotic, and, under its soothing influence, I dropt into slumber, from which I awoke not until the next morning. How painful is the first awakening from sleep after a heavy affliction! How bewildering — how confused the sensations! Yet, even while bewildered, the sense of sorrow pervades the heart, and one dreads to turn to memory for a full explanation of its cause. But soon, alas! the terrible truth reveals itself, and as the veil that shades the senses is withdrawn, agony succeeds it. A burst of grief quickly followed my awaking, and brought Mrs. Burnet to my pillow. How the room, and every object it contained, recalled past and happier times to my mind, awaking countless tender memories.

"Ah! Sir," said the worthy woman, following my eyes, as they glanced around, "it does seem hard to see inanimate things all in their places unchanged, and fresh as when left years before, and — but no! we must not talk of this now. You have painful duties to perform, and I must not unman you."

I arose, and when dressed, went to my mother's room — that room which I had been wont to dread in former times, and the entrance to which I used to consider as a penance. How my heart smote me, as the recollection crossed my mind. A cambric handkerchief veiled the face of my mother, and for a few minutes I had not courage to remove it. When at length, and with a trembling hand I drew it aside, I was seized with an awe that checked my strong desire to embrace that pallid, but still beau-

tiful face, so like, yet so different from what I had anticipated. It looked many years younger than when I had last seen her. Death seemed to have restored youth to those marble lineaments, to that lofty brow, and those finely modeled cheeks. For the first time I became aware of how wonderfully beautiful she must have been, and my regret increased for her loss. There was something inexpressibly tender in that delicate face, which, joined to the calm and holy character which pervaded it, flooded my eyes with tears. The hands were crossed on the breast as in prayer, and their exquisite form and proportion might have led one to suppose they were of Parian marble, fresh from the chisel of some great sculptor, had not a pale lilac tint around the tips of the fingers and nails, betrayed their mortality. And there lay the only being, beside my father, who had ever loved me. There, cold, and in her marble slumber, lay the fond mother, who but a few fleeting hours before had, even in the delirium of fever, demanded me with all the longing impatience of a doting heart. *She* who would have welcomed my coming with her latest accents, was now unconscious of my presence — of my grief. My sighs and sobs moved not the dull ear of death; my burning tears fell unheeded by her, whose hand would in life have wiped them fondly away; and I stood alone in a world, whose coldness and selfishness I had already learned by sad experience to estimate. A portrait of my father was placed on the wall that fronted the foot of my mother's bed. It had occupied that place ever since his death, that she might behold it on the first moment of awaking, and the last before she resigned herself to sleep. The eyes of the picture seemed to contemplate the pale face, the original had loved so well, with a grave, if not sorrowful expression — that face which, until the last few hours, had ever been turned towards it with such tender sadness. Alas! the painted canvass was not more insensible than the recumbent image before me. Both seemed but as a mockery to my bursting

heart, which yearned to clasp in life, if but even for a moment, that beloved mother, and to tell her all that was passing in my agonized breast. Her bible and prayer-book were on a table by her bedside; several silken strings marked pages in the former, and proved how habitually it had been resorted to. Her *Prie Dieu* stood near, and on it was inscribed in Spanish, a motto, which I remembered she had placed soon after the death of my father. "A day nearer to thee," was the translation, and referred to each day, bringing her nearer to the dead. How warm, how loving had that heart been, that had so lately ceased to beat for ever! How fondly and faithfully had it cherished, and remained true to the memory of him who had been its sole love — its idol; and *now*, it was but as the clod of the valley. It could never more throb with sorrow — never beat with joy, to behold the child of *him* she was gone to join in another world. The violence of my grief became subdued, as I contemplated that pale face. Its heavenly expression seemed to chide my selfish sorrow, while it offered a pledge that she, who could never know happiness on earth, was now blest in heaven.

The next day I opened the escritoire of my mother, and in it I found a letter addressed to me, as if anticipating that we should not meet again. Her maternal feelings were poured out with a lavish fondness in this last letter. She entreated me, that if it was decreed she should be taken from me, not to mourn for her, for that while on earth a sorrow she could not conquer must always poison her existence. She blamed herself for not having fought against it, while yet she had youth and health to aid her in the effort, and for not having devoted the whole of those years given up to a selfish grief to the fulfilment of her duties as a mother. But even in this letter, and while accusing herself, her passionate love for my father broke forth, for she added to this acknowledgment of error, that she believed no woman who had been loved by a being so noble, so virtuous, so good, so superior

to all other men, could ever have been consoled for his loss. She told me that she had for some years paid a pension to her old and esteemed friend, Mrs. Maitland, whose husband had left that amiable lady and her daughters so ill provided for, that, without the assistance she had afforded, they would be unable to enjoy the comforts of life, and she entreated me to continue to pay them that sum as if it were a bequest from her, in order that Mrs. Maitland's delicacy should not be wounded. She added, that one of the wishes nearest to her heart was that I might love, and marry one of the daughters of her friend. She would not urge me to act in this matter contrary to my own inclinations, but if it pleased Providence that either of these amiable girls should win my heart, our marriage would have her maternal benediction bestowed in anticipation of the event. There was a solemnity in this last passage which made a deep impression on me. I determined to continue the pension she had allowed, nay more, to settle it beyond my own power of revocation, on the mother, without ever letting her know it had not been arranged by my mother, who had, in fact, no power to alienate any part of my property.

I questioned Mrs. Burnet about the family, and her answers convinced me that they merited all my mother had done for them.

"The young ladies are beautiful, Sir," said that worthy woman, "and as good as they are handsome. They have but one defect, if indeed the peculiarity to which I refer may be so called, and that may easily be accounted for by their having been brought up in such total solitude in this wild and lonely neighbourhood. They are as shy as uncaged birds, and, like them, fly off at the approach of a stranger. My blessed mistress, who loved them as if they had been her own children, often endeavoured to reason them out of this extreme shyness; but I suppose it is constitutional, for she never succeeded in conquering it."

"Mrs. Maitland," continued Mrs. Burnet, "never left your

dear mother's bedside from the moment she learned her illness until all was over. She said she would come and see you, Sir, as soon as her presence might not be deemed intrusive, for she, too, is a very shy lady. Indeed her daughters, my dear mistress used to say, inherited this peculiarity from her."

The last mournful duties were now to be paid to the dead. How many painful and heart-rending details do they involve! The placing the dead in the coffin, the closing of the lid that shuts for ever from our sight the object which, while we can still gaze on it, does not seem to have wholly left us, and the dark pall covering the coffin, each, and all, of these details bring their own separate agonies, the pangs of which can only be known by those who have experienced them.

Mrs. Maitland and her daughters came to take their last farewell of their departed friend before her remains were concealed for ever. I had not courage to see them, so wholly were my nerves unstrung, so retired to my own chamber while they remained; and when, two days after, I followed my beloved mother to the grave as chief mourner, so wholly engrossed was I by the intense grief to which my heart was a prey, that I did not recognise in the veiled and weeping persons who attended the solemn ceremony a single face I knew.

Who can paint the agony of seeing the coffin of one fondly loved lowered into the vault — of hearing the earth thrown on the coffin lid — of seeing the large flag replaced over the aperture, and of returning to the now desolate home so lately occupied by the dear departed! In all this agony, there was something soothing in the knowledge of how general was the sympathy in my grief, for my dear mother was beloved and lamented by the whole neighbourhood. She had received every care, every attention, from the friends she most esteemed, all the devout and touching rites of the Church had prepared her for the last change, and had been offered over her grave, — there was much to be thankful

for in this; and so eagerly does the human heart, while yet youth is left, turn for consolation in its first heavy sorrow to any source whence it can be found, that mine dwelt with a pleasure, melancholy though it was, on these points. The clergyman walked with me from the church to my home. He pressed me cordially to take up my abode in his house for the present, and I had some difficulty in declining his reiterated offers, or rather requests, to be allowed to spend the rest of the day with me. Would to heaven that I had not declined them! for how would this simple circumstance have changed my destiny — from what years of agony would it not have saved me!

But we are the victims of circumstances, over which we frequently have no control. Our happiness, or misery, depends on some trifling chance, against which no prudence, no forethought, can guard us, and the result of which colours our fate for the remainder of our lives. Had any one told me that a greater misfortune, a severer trial, than that which I had gone through on the morning of that day, awaited me before its close, I would have slighted the notice, and disbelieved the warning. No; I fancied that fate had done its worst by me, in snatching away my only parent ere her age could have prepared me for such a blow; and while, with the foolish security peculiar to youth, I counted on retaining the blessing of her existence through many a year to come. It was thus I reasoned. Fool, idiot, that I was! little dreaming of the terrible event impending over my devoted head, and of that of one of Nature's fairest works! Oh! why does no presentiment warn us, when Fate menaces us with one of its most appalling strokes? Why did not some good, some pitying angel, whisper me to accept the kind offer of the pastor to remain with me that day? Alas! we are but tools in the hands of Providence, working out unconsciously its immutable decrees!

When I entered my desolate home, I stole to my mother's chamber. Its deserted air, its silence, and solitude, were

congenial to my feelings; and having locked the door, to prevent the intrusion of the worthy Mrs. Burnet, I flung myself on the bed so lately pressed by her I had but two hours before seen laid in the dark and dreary vault by the side of my father, and yielding to grief, I wept with uncontrollable emotion, until tired nature sought relief in a sleep more resembling the stupor of disease than the refreshing slumber of health. — I awoke not until the sun was going down, and a mild and beautiful evening had replaced the glorious day. My head ached, my pulse throbbed with fever, and a burning heat parched my throat. I felt as if I could not breathe within doors, as an unfortunate bird might feel in an exhausted receiver, and dreading the officious kindness of Mrs. Burnet, while suffering under my present state of mental and physical irritation, I determined to go forth into the open air.

I forgot, that since the previous day, I had tasted no food whatever, and during the four preceding ones, so little, as scarcely served to sustain life. This unusual abstinence had greatly excited the nervous system. I felt giddy, my eyes emitted sparks as if of fire, and when I closed their burning lids to shut out light, they felt as if they enclosed warm blood, so hot and crimson seemed all within them.

A small bottle of *Eau des Carmes* stood on a shelf in the room — a few drops of it, in water, had been occasionally used as a restorative for my poor mother when she was attacked by spasms. I seized it, and there being no water in the chamber, I hastily raised the bottle to my lips, and my parched throat had swallowed a considerable portion of its contents before I was aware of the strength of the liquid.

I opened the window, stepped from it into a portion of the garden inclosed from the rest, by a high hedge of Laurestinas, and open only to the glass-door and windows of my mother's room, and a small gate that led into a grove close by. This portion of the garden had been divided from the rest to secure the

privacy its owner loved. Here would she sit for hours, reading, or would sometimes ramble into the shady grove, always keeping in her own possession the key of the gate.

By going out through this little gate, I should avoid meeting Mrs. Burnet, or any of the servants; indeed, no part of the house commanded a view of it. — How vividly does every circumstance of that evening dwell in my mind! I remember the perfume that stole on my olfactory nerves as I stepped into the garden filled with flowers — I remember the deep stillness of the air, the crimson and golden glories of the curtain, beneath which the sun was hiding his last beams, and the feverish excitement of my feelings. My hand trembles so violently that it can scarcely hold the pen, for I am now, my dearest child, coming to the narrative of the dread event that has blighted all my prospects, and steeped my life in inextricable wretchedness.

CHAPTER X.

I PASSED the gate, entered the grove, and walked through a shaded lane leading to a wild and romantic spot, well remembered since my boyish days. This spot was situated on the brow of a steep and precipitous rock, at the bottom of which a rapid stream rushed wildly on amidst fragments of rocks and little islands covered with verdure, that bent into its glittering breast. On the left lay a wood that formed a beautiful back ground, leaving only a space of ground sufficiently wide for two persons to walk, between it and the rocky precipice to the right.

Often had I gone in search of birds' nests in this wood in my childhood, and descended among the clefts of the rock to the verge of the stream. In some of these clefts, inaccessible to other visitants, from the danger of the steep and slippery descent, I had been wont to enter in the sultry days of summer, pleased to find so cool a retreat, and proud of having accomplished a feat of no little danger, as also in having discovered hiding-places unknown to all beside.

As I advanced along this path I noticed a small rustic alcove, erected during my absence, and remembered that my dear mother had written to me to say she had had it raised as a resting-place for her friend, Mrs. Maitland and her daughters, in their daily visits to her, the spot being half-way between the two abodes. This led my mind to a new train of thought. I recollected the desire expressed by my departed parent that I should wed one of the daughters of her friend. I remembered that Mrs. Burnet had praised the great beauty of both, and with the heart yearning for some one to love, which had haunted me for years, my pulse

beat quicker, as I pictured to myself, that in one of these young beauties I might find the long-desired object to satisfy all its cravings.

I approached the rustic alcove, and as I reached its entrance, I saw that it was occupied. — I stood speechless from emotion, unable to offer an excuse for my involuntary intrusion, but the person to whom it should have been addressed, spoke not, moved not—seemed wholly unconscious of my presence. A girl, young, and and oh! how exquisitely beautiful, was before me. She reclined on a wooden bench, her arm resting on a table, and supporting her fair cheek, over which her rich brown tresses fell in luxuriant profusion. I approached nearer on tiptoe, and so softly that I could not hear my own steps; and now I discovered that the lovely being was asleep. How calm, how sweet was the expression of her face! The rosy lips were slightly parted, revealing teeth like orient pearls; the long dark silken eyelashes shaded her cheeks, just arriving where the delicate rose-colour tinged them; and her full and rounded bust by its gentle but regular undulations, denoted that she slumbered. Never had I beheld aught so lovely. Transfixed, and almost breathless, I continued to gaze on her. I was tempted to doubt the reality of her presence, and to accuse my senses of having deceived me. — I rubbed my eyes like one awaking from a dream, but still there she reclined in all the helplessness of repose, with all the innocence and beauty we attribute to a slumbering seraph.

It flashed through my brain that the fair sleeper must be one of the daughters of my mother's friend—perhaps the one designed by her to be my wife, and oh! what a tumult of rapture thrilled my heart at the thought, that the wondrous charms before me might one day become mine. I forgot my grief, deep and sincere as it had been. How could it exist while I gazed on the exquisite beauty, so softly slumbering near me, whose sweet breath pass-

ing through her half-opened lips, came to me as the odour from some balmy and fragrant flower.

Intoxicated with delight, I could no longer resist the uncontrollable impulse to press my lips on that snowy forehead — but I would press them so lightly, as not to awaken the sleeper, and heaven is my witness, that excited as I was, no thought that could have wounded her purity presented itself to my mind. No, I would retire, after having kissed that beautiful brow, and, concealed behind the rustic alcove, watch over her safety, and prevent her repose being intruded on. I approached close to her, trembling with emotion, — her sweet breath fanned my cheek, and tempted me almost beyond my power of resistance to press the crimson portal whence it passed; but there was something so pure, so innocent, in the beauteous face, that I dare not profane her lips, — these could I only hope to touch with mine when they should have pronounced her consent to become my wife. So, gently bending down, I lightly imprinted a kiss on her fair forehead. No sooner had I done so than she started up, opened her eyes wildly, uttered a cry, and rushed from the alcove. I called to her, told my name, implored her not to fly from me, and entreated her pardon; but all was in vain, she heeded me not, but quickening her speed, ran madly along. The whole consequences of the effect certain to be produced on her mind, and on that of her mother, when, terrified and exhausted, she should reach her home, flashed on my mind. I should be viewed by both with indignation and disgust, as a hardened libertine, who, on the very evening of the day that had seen my dear mother consigned to the grave, — when sorrow alone should fill my heart, had stolen upon the privacy of the daughter of her friend, and dared to seek to take advantage of her slumber. Yes, I should be driven with abhorrence from their door; I should lose for ever this lovely being, for no explanation could justify me, or make them believe the innocence of my intentions.

These reflections passed through my brain with the velocity with which the past life is said to flash through the mind of the drowning wretch, and, maddened by the dread of losing her, I flew, rather than ran, in the direction she had taken. I gained rapidly on her steps, and she, I suppose still more terrified at hearing mine, increased her speed, keeping near the edge of the precipice. I could almost have seized her garment, so close had I got, when her foot slipt, and Oh! horror of horrors, she rolled over the declivity, and in a moment was lost to my sight.

Oh! God, never will the terror, the despair of that moment, be effaced from my memory! Even now, as I trace these lines, my hand trembles, my brain grows giddy at the recollection. With the rapidity of lightning, and careless of life, I rushed down one of the wild paths never, perhaps, trodden save by the feet of goats, and my own, but remembered since my childhood. I jumped from crag to crag, where one false step would have cast me into the yawning abyss beneath, until I reached the narrow band of sand which separated the base of the rock from the river. There she lay, part of her person immersed in the water. I raised her in my arms, and found she had not ceased to breath. Oh! Almighty God, how fervent was the thanksgiving I offered up that moment to thy throne, that she still lived. I placed her on the sand-bank, bathed her temples with water from the stream, and knelt down beside her to feel if her heart still beat. A few feeble pulsations proved that life was not extinct, and hope once more broke on my mind even in spite of reason. I prayed, I wept, I raved aloud — my eyes fixed on that angelic face — but in a few minutes a slight shudder passed over it, the lips opened, gasped, and breathing a deep sigh, her soul passed away.

Never, never, can the agony of that moment be effaced from my mind. To think that ten minutes, ten short minutes before, and she was alive, in health, and with the promise of many years of existence — and now, there she lay, a lifeless, mutilated

corpse! And I — I, was the cause of all this. I considered myself as much her murderer as if my hand had hurled her down the precipice: for had not my folly in daring to shock and terrify her, led to the frightful catastrophe that had occurred. I called down imprecations on my own head, I wept, tore my hair, flung myself by her side, and embraced her lifeless form. What was I to do? Ought I not at once to go and denounce my crime, and offer myself up to justice? Then came the deep, the inherent sense of shame. Who would believe that I had not more criminal intentions than those which God alone knew filled my heart, when I kissed her brow? How terrible, how ignominious would be the suspicions to which my self-denunciation must give rise—suspicions which I had no means of refuting, except my simple asseverations of the whole truth, asseverations which I felt assured no one would credit. No, I dared not avow the fact — I must conceal it for ever — for ever bear the dreadful secret pent up in my own breast — never more to hope for sympathy in the misery which must henceforth cloud my days. There were moments, when, turning my eyes from the still beautiful face of the departed, to the rapid river that almost laved my feet, I was tempted to lift the corpse in my arms, and to plunge with it into its bosom; but an unseen hand — the hand of the Almighty, held me back, and I determined not to rush uncalled into the dread presence of my Creator.

Then the thought of consigning the corpse to the river occurred to me. I reasoned that if found it would be supposed that she had accidentally fallen over the cliff into the water, and had been carried away by the current. This would be the safest of all methods not only of getting rid of the corpse, but of accounting for her death; and the fearful catastrophe which had taken place had so wholly sobered me, that I was fully capable of judging it to be so. But when I gazed on the beautiful face—the exquisite form of the dead — I shrunk back with terror from the thought of exposing it

to be injured by fishes, or, more horrible, to be devoured by water-rats, with which the river abounded. At length the recollection of one of the deep clefts in the rocks flashed on my mind. Yes, I would bear her there to take her everlasting rest, never more to be seen by mortal eye save mine. I lifted her in my arms, and tottering beneath the weight of my precious burthen, I bore her in the direction of the well-remembered opening. The moon had risen, so I was enabled to find the place, which was not far distant; and laying the corpse close to its entrance, I first crept in on my hands and knees, and then drew it after me by the shoulders, as gently as if I moved a sleeping child, trembling lest I should injure it. Having drawn it to the innermost part of the cavern, I composed the limbs with as scrupulous a delicacy as if the departed had been my sister or my daughter. I covered it over as carefully, with the shawl tied around her slender waist, as if the night air could chill that lifeless form; and I placed small fragments of the rock that had from time to time fallen in, on the edge of the shawl, to prevent any reptiles that the cavern might contain, from touching her. Many a tear flowed down my cheeks while I performed this sad, sad duty, and reflected on how rude a bed now reclined that lovely form, which had hitherto been watched over by a mother's love.

I left the cavern, and with rapid but stealthy steps, keeping always in the shadow of trees or rocks, reached the little gate so lately passed, crossed the garden, creeping close to the continuous high screen of laurestinas, pushed open the lattice, and entered the chamber as noiselessly as a midnight robber. I carefully examined my clothes and boots by the light of the lamp which I had left burning in the chimney. I removed every fragment of clay and sand that had adhered to them, and collecting these last, consigned them to one of the most distant beds of the garden, there to mingle with the earth. I brushed my clothes until no trace of soil remained, and then believed my task ac-

complished; when examining my hands, I discovered that they were stained with blood! Her blood! The murderer who for the first time has dyed his hand with human gore, and discovers it when a witness may in a moment detect this proof of his crime, never experienced more horror and terror than I did, when I gazed on my ensanguined fingers. Shuddering I removed the stains, emptied the water into the garden, carefully closed the lattice, unlocked the door of the chamber, flung myself on my bed, and rang my bell. Mrs. Burnet soon answered the summons.

"O, Sir," observed she, "I was never before so rejoiced to hear the sound of a bell, for I was most fearful that you were very unwell. I have been to your door frequently, but would not open it, lest I might awake you." (She could not open it, as it was locked inside, but I was glad to find *she* did *not* know this circumstance.)

"I have been asleep," said I, "but my head aches sadly. Let me have a little weak wine and water."

"I am afraid, Sir, you are more ill than you think," observed the worthy woman, "for your voice sounds so husky, and, altogether, you look so unlike yourself; but it 's not to be wondered at, after all you have gone through this day."

When Mrs. Burnet brought me the wine and water I detained her in my chamber, for I dreaded being alone, and it also occurred to me that her presence there on this eventful night might, should suspicion of the tragedy which had occurred ever be pointed towards me, be received as a proof of my innocence. I loathed myself for this base and selfish cunning, even while obeying its dictates to preserve a life that must henceforth be one of wretchedness. I talked to her of my mother, drew from her details of her mode of passing her time, but I shuddered when I found all of these details were mixed up with particulars of her friend Mrs. Maitland and her daughters.

"Never, Sir, was there a more charming family. The mother so kind, so considerate. She loved my dear mistress as a sister, nursed her and watched over her health and comfort so tenderly and unceasingly. There never was so devoted a mother. Her life is bound up in her children, and, I must say, they well deserve all her fondness. Miss Maitland is the most lovely, amiable young creature alive. So sweet tempered, so gentle, so charitable! Often has your dear blessed mother said to me, 'Ah! Burnet, how happy I should be if my son were to marry Miss Maitland. I am sure he can't help loving her the moment he sees her, she is so beautiful and engaging.'"

How tumultuously my agonized heart beat as I listened to Burnet repeating my departed mother's words, and remembered that the creature she spoke of was now numbered with the dead, her cold remains concealed in the rude cavern where I had placed them!

"I 'm sure," resumed Mrs. Burnet, "that I can't tell which of the two young ladies my dear mistress loved the best. She often said she did not know, *both* were so dear to her. Miss Louisa is as handsome as her sister, and as amiable also, and more, yielding-like, than Miss Maitland. My mistress used to call them her 'gazelles;' they were so shy, flying away from the sight of a stranger like those pretty animals."

And *I*, who had learned this peculiarity in both the sisters, had, like a maniac, provoked it into action, — had terrified, and caused the death of *her* my mother had destined to be my wife, — and was now compelled to assume an air of indifference, while listening to the praises of my victim! Well had my dear mother judged, that I could not resist loving Miss Maitland as soon as I had seen her! Who *could* resist loving such a creature? How I shuddered when I reflected what must be the alarm of the fond mother and sister when they found the dear absent girl returned not to her home, — an alarm to be followed by the agony of pro-

longed fear and suspense, when no tidings of her could be gained! How my heart bled for them! — and oh, how I execrated myself as the cause of their affliction!

While Burnet was resuming her praises of the young ladies, a loud knocking came to the hall door. I half started from my bed, and terror filled my breast. Had my guilt been discovered by some unseen spectator, who had marked my pursuit of the flying and terrified girl, and had seen the terrible catastrophe? was the first thought that flashed on my mind. Had the officers of justice come in search of me? was the second; and I trembled so violently that, had not Mrs. Burnet quickly left the room, my evident terror must have awakened her curiosity, if not her suspicions. I ran to the door of the chamber, which opened into the hall, and heard her demand "who knocked?"

"It is I, Mrs. Brunet," answered a man's voice. "Is Miss Maitland here?"

"Here?" reiterated Burnet; "What should bring her here at this hour?" And she unlocked the door, and a man entered.

"Then our last hope is gone!" exclaimed the man; and I heard him fling himself into a chair.

"Good God, what has occurred?" demanded Mrs. Burnet, now greatly excited.

"Miss Maitland left home this evening to take a walk, did not return at her usual hour, and night coming on, and my mistress getting alarmed, she sent me off in search of her. I have been in every direction, but cannot find her. John Jones's boy said he saw her walking towards the half-way seat, and there, sure enough, I found her pocket-handkerchief, which showed the poor dear young lady had been a-crying, for it was wet with her tears. Indeed, for that matter, all the three ladies have done nothing but cry ever since the death of Mrs. Herbert."

How my heart smote me!

"Good God, Ap Owen, this is very alarming!" said Mrs. Burnet.

"I've been to the churchyard," resumed Ap Owen; "for it struck me, that, mayhap Miss had gone there to see the spot where her kind friend was laid,—for you know, Mrs. Burnet, she doted on Mrs. Herbert,— but there was no sign of her there, so I returned home, thinking that she might have got back, but, woe's me, she had never been near her home, and so I came off here!"

"My master has been very poorly, and in bed, ever since he came from the funeral," said Mrs. Burnet; "but I'll go and tell him this heavy news; and I'm sure he'll get up at once and join in the search for Miss Maitland."

I had barely time to rush into my bed, and assume as calm an air as I could command, when Mrs. Burnet hurried into my chamber to tell me the news. "I will get up at once," said I, "and join the search."

"Ah, I knew you would!" observed she. "God grant you may discover where the dear young lady is, and restore her safely to her poor distracted mother and sister!"

I dismissed the good woman, and, while I hurried on my clothes, I could hear her telling Ap Owen "how good it was of me, so ill as I had been all the evening, to leave my sick-bed and expose myself to the night air — but it was just like me — I had all the kindness of my dear mother, and never considered self."

"Good heavens," thought I, "if she but knew the truth, how would she shun and hate me!" What a hypocrite — what a wretch have I become! How am I to meet the unhappy mother, and sister, whose grief I have caused? How bear to hear them speak of the angel whose evil destiny it was that I should cross her path! I felt my spirit quail before the honest servitor Ap Owen, when I joined him in the hall, and was glad that Mrs. Burnet had accounted for my agitation by having told him of my illness.

CHAPTER XI.

"In what direction had we best proceed," said I to Ap Owen. "Do your suspicions point to any particular point?"

"In truth no, Sir. We have no bad people about this place. We are so far from any high road, that no strangers come here, and the neighbourhood is so honest, that I can't suspect any one: indeed, for the matter of that, my mistress and the young ladies are so beloved, that there is not a man, woman, or child in the whole parish that would harm them. What I fear, is, that Miss Maitland may have missed the path in the dark, and have fallen over the rock into the water. God grant I may be wrong in this surmise; but I don't know how otherwise to account for her disappearance."

This natural suspicion on the part of Ap Owen quieted, in some measure, my selfish alarm; but then came the dread that the river would be drawn, and when no corpse was discovered, suspicion must point elsewhere.

"I think, Sir, it will be well for us to go first to the cottage. She *may* have returned since I left it."

I trembled at the thought of confronting the mother and sister of my victim. How could I sustain their glances? Would not my countenance reveal to them that I was, if not guilty of her death, cognizant of the fact? Well has it been said, that "a guilty conscience needs no accuser;" and deeply did I feel the truth of the axiom, for I fancied that every eye might detect in my face the fearful secret that pressed like a mountain of lead on my breast. I dared not offer any excuse for a non-compliance with Ap Owen's proposition, lest it might lead to suspicion, so I roused my courage to its utmost extent, and accompanied him to the

residence of Mrs. Maitland. As we approached the cottage, I was struck with its beautiful and romantic aspect. What a contrast did it offer to the feelings of its occupants, and to my own! Embosomed in trees, and surrounded by a garden filled with odoriferous plants and flowers, it looked the picture of peace; and except that lights flashed from the windows, one might have supposed that its inhabitants had long sunk in repose. No sooner, however, had Ap Owen opened the garden gate, than the bereaved mother and daughter rushed forth; the former exclaiming, "my child! my child!" while the latter pronounced the word "sister," in accents so full of hope, that my heart sickened at the thought of how soon that hope must be destroyed.

"Oh, God! Oh, God!" said the distracted mother, grasping the arm of Ap Owen, "do you bring me no tidings of my child! Does she live? Oh! say but that she is still alive, and I will bear all else, and will bless you."

I could not, had my life depended on the effort, have spoken to Mrs. Maitland at that moment. I felt ready to throw myself at her feet and avow the truth, so deep was the emotion her maternal agony had produced in my breast.

"I wish, Ma'am, I could give you any news," replied Ap Owen, in trembling accents. "This gentleman is Mr. Herbert, who left his sick-bed to come and help me in the search, and ill enough he is, God knows, for he has had many fits of trembling since we left his house, and see now how he shakes."

I made a desperate effort to recover self-composure, and approached Mrs. Maitland.

"Ah! I ought to have guessed who you were," said she, "for you resemble my friend; but my brain is so tortured, that I remember nothing but my child — the dearest, sweetest, but —"

Here a violent paroxysm of tears impeded her utterance, and she fell, half fainting, into the arms of her daughter. In a few

minutes she revived, and though still tottering from weakness, she approached me and grasped my arm.

"We lose time!" exclaimed she. "Every moment is precious; let us set out in different directions in search of my child. Let us call her name aloud. She may have over-fatigued herself and fallen asleep in some sequestered spot. She has told me that this has occurred to her more than once in her long rambles."

O! how quick beat my heart at this truthful guess.

"Yes! it must be so," resumed the distracted mother, her death-like face lighting up with excitement at this new hope. Hitherto I had not looked at the daughter. Indeed I avoided it from two motives: the first that of dreading to increase the agitation I already felt; and the second, a fear of exposing it to her. But at this moment, a dark cloud, which had for some time obscured the moon's disk, floated away, leaving that glorious luminary revealed in all its splendour, and involuntarily my eyes turned on the young lady, whose pale face was illumined by its silvery light. So striking was her resemblance to her sister, that I started violently, and uttered a cry, before my reason could check the sudden impulse. Then recollecting myself, I pressed my hand to my side, and in answer to the inquiries from Mrs. Maitland, feigned a sudden spasm at my heart, to which I asserted I had lately been subject. Alas! there was a greater, a more lasting agony in that heart, than ever physical suffering inflicted.

"I am sorry to be compelled to allow you to stay in the night air, when you ought to be in your bed," said Mrs. Maitland; "but such is my intense anxiety about my child, that I have not courage enough to dispense with your aid in the search of her."

I hurried from the presence of the distracted mother and daughter, and with Ap Owen again renewed the unavailing pursuit.

"Somehow, Sir," said he, "the notion that the poor, dear young lady has tumbled down one of the precipices, grows stronger and stronger in my mind. It 's difficult, and very dangerous too, to descend, the rocks are so slippery, and besides, though gentlemen like you may laugh at such superstitions, poor men like me can't quite get the better of 'em. It has been said for years and years, that among the steep rocks there are caverns from which unearthly sounds have been heard to proceed, and that those who attempted to explore them, soon came to a violent end. So general is the belief entertained in these parts of the truth of these stories, that I don't think there is a man in the whole neighbourhood who could be induced to descend, however great the reward offered."

What a weight seemed lifted from my heart at this intelligence, for ever since he had expressed his belief that Miss Maitland had fallen down the precipice, I had concluded that a careful search would inevitably be made, and that her remains would be discovered.

How did I regret having removed them from the spot where the corse had dropped and where, if found, the belief that she had accidentally fallen over the cliff would be universally received. Less terrible would be the grief of the bereaved mother and sister, when the fact of the death of her so dear to them was actually proved, than to have to bear for ever the agonies of suspense. I was half tempted to steal to the cavern the moment I could free myself from Ap Owen, and to remove the corse to the spot where I had found it.

"You, Sir, I suppose, don't believe in ghosts or fairies," resumed my companion, "but I assure you, that among the poor people about here, there is not a single person who doubts that there are such things. Yes, Sir, and warnings too. Why, it was only last night that a raven kept flapping his wings near the bed-room windows of the young ladies, and uttered such

wild cries as awoke my mistress, who told my sister, who has lived with her ever since she came to Wales. My sister was quite frightened when she heard of it, for we all look on a raven crying near a house as a sign of the death of one of the inhabitants. She told it to me this morning, after she had dressed her mistress. 'I 'm afraid,' said she, 'it will be the old lady, for she grieves so for the loss of her friend, Mrs. Herbert, that she 'll make herself ill.' Who 'd have thought it could be one of the young ladies? so healthy, so active, so likely to live for years and years. And now I think of it, would you believe it, Sir, that no later than last night, my sister showed me a winding-sheet on the candle, as plain a one as ever I saw in my life, with all the fine narrow plaits running down it, and turning over: yes, Sir, no later than last night; and whoever saw a winding-sheet on a candle without hearing of a death soon after?"

Such were the topics on which the superstitious Ap Owen spoke, while we explored every leafy nook, every moss-covered stone, or rustic seat, where she, for whom our vain search was making, could be supposed to stop to rest. I frequently proposed that we should separate, and continue our search in different directions; but so strongly had his mind been infected by his own superstitious tales, that Ap Owen dreading to be left alone, started at every breeze that moved the branches of the surrounding trees, and trembled at the sight of any object on which the moon-beams fell more strongly. We abandoned not our search until day broke in the east, when, worn down by fatigue and mental anguish, I returned home, to fling myself on my bed. I fell into a slumber from exhaustion; but the fearful event of the previous evening haunted me in my sleep. Again I stood in the rustic alcove, gazing on the lovely slumberer; again I stole on tiptoe to press my lips to her forehead, and once more I beheld her start from her repose in terror, and

wildly rush from the spot. In vain I tried to overtake her, and avert the doom that with an almost supernatural prescience, I foresaw awaited her, but my feet seemed to be of lead, I could not move, although I saw her with unsteady steps approach the giddy height, stumble, and then fall into the abyss beneath. I uttered so wild a cry, that Mrs. Burnet hurried into the chamber, and found me with drops of cold perspiration rolling from my brow, my frame trembling violently, and my mind wandering. These symptoms were the precursors of a brain fever. For several days my life was despaired of, and I was unconscious of all that was passing around me, but the one fixed and terrible scene was repeated in my dreams, never failing to produce the most violent emotions, until the fever, yielding to the skilful treatment of the doctor, summoned from the next town, left me, reduced to a state of such extreme weakness, that, helpless as an infant, I seemed to hover between life and death.

It was during these days of physical exhaustion that a reprieve from agony was granted to my mind. I scarcely could recall the circumstances of the event that had led to my illness. All was vague and dreamy in my memory, and I resigned myself to this half-oblivious state, which afforded a temporary relief to the mental pangs I had been previously suffering, as a worn out patient yields himself to the torpor produced by opiates administered to dull the sense of pain. Female forms glided with noiseless steps around my couch, but I experienced no curiosity to know who they were. I took the medicines or sustenance held to my lips, without examining who offered them, or uttering a word of thanks, and sank back on my pillow again in all the supineness peculiar to persons reduced by long illness to extreme weakness, careless of and ungrateful for the trouble I had given. — But this state of torpid existence was too much happiness for me long to enjoy. With returning strength came back

memory, like a giant refreshed by slumber, and armed to wound. My recollections became clear and distinct, and misery was the result. Yet I did not abandon myself to the vain regret and corroding self-reproach that were preying on my mind, without many an effort to subdue them. Human beings are ever prone to pluck from their hearts the poisoned arrow of remorse that has pierced them, and seek to heal the wound by applying the salve of oblivion. How many excuses did I make for the share I had borne in the late terrible catastrophe! How much sophistry did I expend in the endeavour to prove myself guiltless!

I would mentally argue, "Was it *my* fault that the lovely creature, now no more, had rushed upon death, from a shyness, a *sauvagerie* I called it, that prevented her heeding my earnest prayers and entreaties to her to stop? Could I have done otherwise than pursue her, under the circumstances? Would she not have told her mother and sister, in terms exaggerated by her terror, that I had stolen on her slumber, and dared to profane with my lips, that face which never before had been pressed by man, save by her father? Should I not have been viewed as a reckless, heartless libertine, who, on the evening of the day that consigned my mother to the grave, could thus invade the privacy of one she loved as her own child?" There were moments when this vain sophistry could silence my bitter self-reproaches; but soon came back the truth, armed with its stings. It whispered that had I forborne to indulge the impulse of my ill-regulated mind, had I unseen, guarded her slumber, until she had awakened, and then followed her steps to prevent molestation or alarm to her from others; she, whose cold remains were now hastening to decay in a wild spot, where the solemn rites of the church, the sacred words of the minister of religion had never been heard to sanctify it, would now be alive and well, happy, and dispensing happiness; and then a paroxysm of remorse and despair would overpower me.

I had been indulging these bitter reflections one day, when Mrs. Burnet, for the first time since my convalescence, addressed me more at length than in the usual few words of inquiry about my health, which she was in the habit of making daily, "Have you not noticed, my dear master?" said she, "that you have had another nurse, beside me, during your illness?"

"Yes, now you name it, I have a vague notion of having seen some one else hovering around my bed, but I have felt so strangely of late that I hardly knew how to distinguish between dreams and what was actually passing around me."

"Ah! Sir, you have a heart full of sensibility and kindness, and you have met with those who can truly appreciate it. Many a tear has Mrs. Maitland shed by your bed-side, when she heard you in your sleep lamenting the loss of her daughter."

I started, and was filled with terror, lest I had revealed my terrible secret.

"What did I say?" demanded I, "I now have a dim recollection, that I had some fearful dreams about a young lady falling down from a high rock and my trying to save her!" said I, anxious to account for any strange disclosure I might have made in my sleep. But there was no occasion for this *ruse*. Those who had listened to my wild and broken exclamations, had attributed them to the shock produced on my nervous system, by finding my mother dead, after my long and hurried journey to catch her last sigh, followed, by the sudden and alarming disappearance of the daughter of her friend; the severe affliction in which I had beheld the mother and daughter plunged, and the fatigue I had encountered in the search, with their servant Ap Owen, which he had rather over-rated, in order to prove his own zeal. The brain fever that followed accounted to Mrs. Maitland and the worthy Mrs. Burnet for the strange words I had uttered, and had gained me credit with them for a more than usual degree

of tenderness of heart and sympathy with the affliction that had befallen my mother's friend.

"But what did I say? my good Burnet," demanded I again, anxious to know how far I might have revealed my dreadful secret.

"Why Sir, you cried out, 'oh! she has fallen over the rock. She will be killed. Oh God! I have driven her to this. It is I who killed her!' And then, Sir, you talked so wildly, about having hidden her corpse."

I was chilled by terror, while Burnet calmly repeated my wild ravings; ravings, which alas! had but too much truth in them.

"Mrs. Maitland," resumed she, "was filled with gratitude, for the deep interest, which it was plain from your words, you had taken in her misfortune. How strange, Sir, are the ravings of delirium! There were you, accusing yourself of a terrible crime, which, if committed at all, must have been while you were sleeping that evening, worn down as you were by grief, and I in the next room, ready to answer the first ring of your bell. Lord, bless us, thought I, if a poor man, or a man of bad character, who had no one to answer for where he was during that evening, and to prove he had not left his home, had uttered these self-accusations, he would have been apprehended, and probably his life put in jeopardy."

A shudder passed over my frame as I listened to these observations, and I became sensible how essential it must henceforth be for me to avoid having any one near enough to overhear me while I slept, lest I should betray myself.

"And has no intelligence of the young lady been had?" inquired I, trembling, while I asked the question.

"Alas! no, Sir, though every place has been searched, advertisements inserted in several newspapers, and rewards offered for tidings of her, or for finding the body, no accounts have been received. Is it not a surprising, a wonderful thing, Sir?"

I longed, but dared not inquire, whether the clefts among

the rocks had been searched, and yet it seemed so likely that they must have been examined, owing to the supposition entertained by Ap Owen, from the first moment of her being missed, that there could be little doubt of it. How fortunate it had been, that, as I had the folly of moving it, I had concealed the corpse so securely. It was madness of me to have removed it from the place where it had dropped. Found there, it would naturally have been surmised that she had accidentally fallen over the cliff, her dear remains would have received the rites of Christian burial, her poor mother and sister would have the melancholy consolation of weeping over her grave, and be spared the terrible suspense in which they now were, would be over.

How strange that all these obvious facts had not presented themselves to my mind on that fatal night! But I was maddened by the event, and incapable of thinking.

CHAPTER XII.

The following day, Mrs. Burnet told me that Mrs. Maitland intended to come and see me. "I assure you, Sir, this good lady entertains for you a warm sentiment of affection," said that faithful creature. She perceived by my countenance that I was little disposed for the interview, which she attributed solely to the weak state of my health rendering me nervous, and unwilling to receive visitors.

"She will be much mortified and hurt, if you decline seeing her, Sir, after her unceasing attention during your illness, and at a period, too, when she was suffering under so heavy an affliction."

"I will see her, my good Burnet, for I am truly sensible of all her kindness."

"And the young lady, too, Sir, has, I assure you, in spite of all her own affliction for the loss of a sister she positively doted on, shown the deepest interest about you, and has told me repeatedly she never could forget the sensibility you betrayed on that fatal night. She has always accompanied her mother here in her daily visits while you were so ill."

I shuddered at hearing by what ears my ravings had been heard, and was grateful to Providence that they passed but as the promptings of delirium. When I learnt that Mrs. Maitland had come, I screwed my courage to its utmost pitch to enable me to meet her with calmness, but when, on entering, she approached the sofa on which I reclined, and kindly clasped my hand within hers, inquiring in the gentlest tone of voice about my health, I felt ready to sink to the earth. Suspense and sorrow had made

terrible inroads on her health since the eventful night on which I had seen her; and the fatigue of her frequent vigils by my sick couch, had, I felt sure, added to the weakness of her frame. I attempted to say something about the late mysterious and terrible affair, but ere I could form the words, she entreated me not to refer to that subject, for "although," added she, "it occupies all my thoughts, I have not yet acquired sufficient self-control to speak of it, without its bringing on such violent paroxysms of grief, as nearly to destroy me."

"I have still a child on earth," said she, "though my first-born has been snatched from me. For the sake of my remaining daughter, I would fain live until she shall have found a protector; but God's will be done; and all I pray for is resignation to bear it as I ought."

The mortal pallor of her face, the tremulous motion of her lips, and her difficult breathing, convinced me that her health had received so severe a shock as to leave but little chance of its ever recovering.

Mrs. Maitland had been very lovely; and pale and attenuated as she now was, her face still retained much of its pristine beauty, and her figure, though fragile, was graceful and dignified. Whether it was the force of imagination or not, I could not decide; but every time I looked at her I was struck with her strong resemblance to that lost and lovely being, who, although only beheld for a few brief minutes, had left an impression on my mind never to be effaced. I felt drawn towards the bereaved mother by an irresistible impulse, and she, grateful for my attention, soon learned to repay it with an unfeigned regard. She visited me daily, often bringing her daughter to see me; and although, during the first few interviews, the sight of this beautiful creature, owing to her striking resemblance to her lost sister, moved and greatly agitated me, I had sufficient self-control to conceal my emotion, and by degrees habituated myself

so much to her presence, that after some weeks it became indispensable to my happiness. Happiness! and dared I to aspire to this boon, was it possible, with the terrible secret pent up in my heart, and bowed down by the consciousness of having caused the death of one of the fairest and purest beings that ever lived — of having steeped her mother and sister in a grief that was preying on the life of one, and embittering that of the other, that I could hope for happiness? Yet such is man. So prone is he to forget the evil he brings on others, and to look for enjoyment, that not even the severest trials can long subdue this inherent selfishness and presumption!

Louisa Maitland was exceedingly lovely, and allowed by all who knew her to be the very image of her sister. This strong resemblance which, during the first weeks of my acquaintance, produced so trying an effect on my nerves, became at last to have a soothing one on them. When she looked at me mildly and sweetly, I used to fancy that it was a sign that the *departed* one had pardoned me for being the involuntary cause of her untimely death; and as my passion for her increased until it engrossed my whole soul, I cheated myself into the belief, that, by seeking her hand, and becoming a son to the bereaved mother, I should best atone for the misfortune I had brought on both.

It was long ere I had sufficient strength to leave the house, and I was so anxious to continue to enjoy the daily visits, now become absolutely necessary to my peace, that even after I was able to move abroad, I was so fearful of a discontinuance of them, that I still assumed the semblance of weakness and langour, which kept these dear beings for several hours every day by my sofa. Days, weeks, and months glided away, my passion for the lovely Louisa hourly increasing. She seemed not insensible to the attachment she had inspired. There were moments when her glance met mine with answering tenderness, and her delicate white hand trembled when I touched it, but with the

coyness peculiar to the most faultless of her sex, and which, when not assumed, forms one of their greatest charms, her eyes would immediately seek the ground, her fair cheeks would become suffused with blushes, and for hours after she would avoid meeting my glance. Oh! those were delicious days, when I awoke with the certainty of seeing her, of hearing that dulcet voice which thrilled me, and made my very heart-strings vibrate, of catching those deep and thoughtful eyes fixed on my face, to be hastily withdrawn of mine met them, and of noting, with all an impassioned lover's rapture, various indications, unconscious on her part, of the progress I was making in her affections! Engrossed and selfish as I was, I noticed not that the health of Mrs. Maitland was daily becoming more impaired, until she at length avowed that she was no longer equal to the exertion of making her diurnal visit to me. I looked at her when she owned this sad truth, and her altered face but too plainly bore evidence to it. How did I reproach myself for having permitted her to undergo this fatigue, when I was perfectly able to have gone to her house; and the uncontrollable burst of tears which the avowal drew from her daughter, although it proved that she, too, had not been aware of the increased indisposition of her mother, and thereby gave me the heartfelt gratification of guessing that *her* thoughts, like my own, had all been directed to another point, could not mitigate my self-reproach. We glanced for a moment at each other, and in that glance all was revealed.

"Don't weep, dearest," said Mrs. Maitland, "I cannot bear your tears. I have long been wishing to make you aware of the truth, but I have not had courage."

"Oh! mother! dearest mother!" exclaimed Louisa, leaving her seat, and clasping her arms around her parent, and the tears of mother and child mingled together. "Do not say that you are in danger. Oh! do not hint that you, too —"

And here her violent emotion impeded her utterance. I arose

from the sofa, and, kneeling before Mrs. Maitland, seized her attenuated hand, and implored her to listen to me with indulgence. "I have loved Louisa since the first hours of our acquaintance," I said. "We have all three experienced such affliction, that I waited until the heavy sense of it had been softened before I dared to avow the deep, the devoted tenderness, I entertain for her. Suffer me to entreat, if I may hope for a return of affection on her part; and if I am to be so blessed, give me the right of becoming your son, and let one roof henceforth shelter us. Speak, dear, adored Louisa; will you accept my hand, and give your dear, your excellent mother, the most devoted and dutiful of sons, whose study from this hour shall be to ensure her comfort and your happiness?"

Louisa, disengaging one of her white arms from the neck of her mother, her face still hidden on the maternal breast, put her hand into mine, but was incapable of uttering a single word. The grace, the innocent confidence of her gesture, melted me to tears. I pressed the little, dimpled hand to my lips, to my heart, and implored Mrs. Maitland to say that she would not oppose my happiness.

"This is all so sudden, so unexpected," said she, "that it has taken me by surprise. But I will not be disingenuous with you. I at once grant my consent, and feel, in doing so, that I can now die whenever it pleases the Almighty to call me hence, without any anxiety about my child. Your dear departed mother often expressed to me her desire that you should wed one of my daughters, and in according my consent, I feel I am acting in consonance with her wishes. Take Louisa's hand, and with it my blessing on both your heads, my dear children."

Louisa sank on her knees by my side, while her mother, placing her trembling hands on our heads, breathed a heart-felt prayer that our union might be crowned with as much happiness as is ever allotted to creatures of earth. I embraced my future

mother-in-law, and pressed my betrothed to my heart, while she, her beautiful cheeks suffused with blushes, over which her pearly tears shone like dew-drops on a rose leaf, hid her face on my shoulder. Mrs. Burnet, the faithful attendant of my mother, was called in to hear the happy tidings, and wept tears of joy as she listened.

How blissful were the days that followed! I went to Mrs. Maitland's house early, and remained there until reminded by my Louisa that it was time for her mother to retire for the night. Who can describe the delight of listening to beautiful lips murmuring admissions, rather than avowals of affection — referring to the first consciousness of love, and to the hopes and fears that ever accompany it — to the sleepless hours, and to the dreams that follow them of the beloved one — of the thousand nameless incidents and thoughts, that mark a growing tenderness hidden in the youthful heart that trembles lest its secret should be revealed. How vapid, how uninteresting does the whole world appear, in comparison with the circumscribed circle which contains all one dotes on! What power, that dignity and wealth could bestow, would one accept in exchange for the rapture of feeling oneself beloved by a creature lovely as our mother Eve ere she sinned, and pure and guileless as an infant! The rapture that succeeded my betrothal with Louisa for some days banished the recollection of her unburied sister, save when, on proceeding in my daily visit to Mrs. Maitland, I had to pass the scene where the terrible catastrophe that had caused her death, had occurred. Then it would break on me, inflicting such pain on my heart, that the smiles and joyous welcome of my betrothed could alone chase the gloomy remembrance from my mind. There were moments, too, when, in all the *épanchements* of confiding love, Louisa would speak to me of her sister — would dwell on her perfections, on her tenderness, and weep her loss, her tears falling on my breast; where,

with almost infantine simplicity she would rest her head when ought excited her feelings.

"Oh! how you would have loved her," would she say; "she was so beautiful, so good, so far superior to me in every respect."

The emotion I could not conceal at such references to the dead, was believed by my Louisa to originate in my sympathy with her regret, and she loved me the more, as she often artlessly confessed, for this proof of affection.

And now the few necessary preparations for our marriage having been made, an ample provision for my future mother-in-law and wife, in case of my death, being secured, our nuptials were to be celebrated with the privacy desired by us, and suitable to the afflictions we had all undergone six months before.

Previous to this ceremony, I wished to visit the cavern, in order to conceal more securely the corpse of the lovely and unfortunate girl, there hidden. I had, ever since my recovery, been haunted by the desire to do this, but had postponed the sad visit through a moral cowardice, that made me shrink from it with dismay. The passion that had taken possession of my heart, filling it with visions of delight and aspirations of happiness, was little calculated to sober down my mind to such a trial. I dreaded it. I feared that it would chase away the voluptuous feelings that had grown on me of late; that it would cloud the bright prospect of happiness that had opened to me, and that it might produce a revulsion of feeling from which I should not be able to emancipate myself. Who is it that has not, after some heavy trial, some severe affliction which has occasioned long hours of mental agony, feared to open again the wounds only beginning to close, but not yet healed? Who has not dreaded to look on a picture, a lock of hair, or the garments of the dear departed object, aware that the sight of them will renew the bitterness of grief, and occasion the wounds

to bleed afresh? There are cells in the brain, the doors of which, heaven, in mercy to our weakness, permits to close, but which, if touched by memory, fly open, and "wakes the nerve where agony is born." We know, we feel, that in those cells our sorrow slumbers, and we tremble lest aught should arouse it, and interrupt the reprieve we have enjoyed. On the slightest symptom of memory awaking we try to divert her attention to other points; we endeavour to silence her whispers — for so prone is man to selfishness, and so anxious to seek enjoyment, that he shrinks from all that can interrupt it.

I wished to be secure from the possibility of the corpse being discovered at any future period, not that I apprehended any danger at present, but I fancied my mind would be easier, more at liberty to enjoy the bliss that awaited my union with the lovely Louisa, if the remains of her sister were consigned to a grave. I had provided myself with a lantern to guide my path in the moonless nights returning from Mrs. Maitland's, and I secretly conveyed a spade and pickaxe from the gardener's shed, as well as a portion of some new matting, found in the same place. Feigning a headache, I left my betrothed much earlier than was my wont, two evenings previous to the day fixed for our marriage, and stealthily entering my garden, I took the matting, spade, and pickaxe, as also a small prayer-book, which I had put in my pocket in the morning, and stole to the spot known only to myself. I had great difficulty in reaching it, encumbered as I was. My feet slipped several times in the dangerous descent, and a dread of being hurled to the bottom, like her who thus met her death, chilled me with terror every time I stumbled. Six months ago, on that terrible night when I last visited this spot, I would have hailed death as a release from the misery and remorse that had seized me. Life then showed me nothing but a protracted state of suffering. But now the blooming bride, who was to bless my arms in two days more, seemed to stand

before me arrayed in all her witching charms, and to live with her, to call her mine, rendered existence a boon that I shuddered at the bare possibility of risking.

At length I reached the opening of the cavern; I entered it, laid down the lantern, which cast its faint but lurid light on the grotesque rocks around. A sickening dread stole over me at the thought of the change which six months must have effected in the corpse I was about to touch, and I drew back with instinctive disgust and horror at the task I had to fulfil. Nevertheless, that task must be performed, however loathesome, however appalling the operation might be, and I moved towards the opening of the inner cavern, with the intention of drawing out the body, when the loud hooting of an owl so startled me, that I nearly fell to the earth. Ashamed of my pusillanimity, I once more approached the spot, knelt down, and, though shuddering while I did so, drew forth the corpse by the feet. At that moment, a huge bat flew against the lantern, which I had placed on a projecting rock, upset it, and extinguished the light. For some time I felt unable to move, and almost incapable of thinking, my hand still clasping the icy feet. At length I recovered myself sufficiently to grope in the direction in which the lantern had fallen; and, after a considerable time spent in searching for it, I found it, and struck a light with a tinder-box, which I had fortunately put into my pocket in fear of accidents. I dared not look on the face of the dead. The shawl I had wrapped around it still enveloped it, and most thankful was I that I was saved the horror of beholding its altered state. I commenced digging a grave, large drops of perspiration dropping from my forehead, while, with the pickaxe, I endeavoured to loosen the compact earth to enable the spade to penetrate it. While I thus laboured, huge bats were continually flitting around me, and from time to time the screech owls sent forth their lugubrious cries.

I dug deep into the earth, and though ready to drop with fa-

tigue, from the hard and unusual labour, I desisted not until I had penetrated some five feet beneath its surface. I then, averting my head while I did so, raised the body in my arms. Its extreme lightness astonished me, but the cause was revealed when the shawl accidentally falling aside, exposed one of the arms and hand of the deceased, which, owing, I suppose, to some peculiar quality in the earth or air in which the corpse had rested, had become dried up like those of a mummy. Though shocked at beholding the withered, discoloured limb, it was less dreadful than to see it in an advanced state of decomposition as I expected, and emitting that fearful odour which marks the decay of mortality. Nothing of this assailed my olfactory nerves, and I was grateful to Providence for being spared it. I placed the matting as a lining in the grave, and then descending into it with my lifeless burthen, using as much tenderness towards it as if it were still susceptible of feeling, I placed it gently in its last earthly resting-place, and read the burial service over it.

The sound of my own voice as I pronounced the solemn words of that sacred and touching service, powerfully affected me; no human accent gave the responses, but the birds of night shrieked dismally while I prayed. I then covered the corpse with a remaining piece of the matting, and, commenced filling up the grave with the earth I had previously dug, shrinking during the operation at the thought that the cloak and matting alone intervened between the corpse, and the clay, I was shoveling over it. I would have given heaps of gold had I possessed them, to have had a coffin in which to place the cold remains, but this was not possible, and although I shuddered at every spadeful of earth I threw into the grave, I nevertheless, continued my painful labour until the floor of the cavern resumed its former appearance. I then strewed dust over the spot, and arming myself with the pickaxe, spade, and lantern, bade an eternal farewell to it.

Oh! thought I, as I ascended the cliffs, could I but see her grave

in some consecrated spot, where the mild air of summer could visit, or the moon-beams play over it; where those who knew her spotless life, and fair form, could bestow a passing sigh, or breathe a prayer, I should feel less wretched. But alas! it may not be, and thou, lovely and guileless being, art denied a fitting sepulchre, though thy memory will ever be cherished in the hearts of those who loved thee, and of him, who, by a terrible fatality, caused thy death!

CHAPTER XIII.

With stealthy steps I reached my home, replaced the pickaxe and spade in the garden-house, rubbed the dust and earth off my clothes, and entered by a key with which I had provided myself, at the commencement of my visits to Mrs. Maitland, in order to save my good Burnet the necessity of getting up to let me in. On entering my bed-room, I again carefully examined and brushed my garments, and then, worn out by emotion and fatigue, I sought my pillow, and fell into a deep slumber, from which I awoke not, until the beams of a bright sun had illumined my chamber.

On first awaking, I was almost disposed to question whether all that had occurred the previous night had not been a dream; but as the whole scene passed through my memory, its reality was evident, and, strange to say, my mind felt more at ease than before.

The chances of the possibility of detection, now that the corpse was hidden in the deep grave, seemed less than ever, and I felt satisfied with myself for having had courage enough to carry my resolution of consigning it to the earth into effect.

I arose from my bed with unusual alacrity, to superintend the arrangements for the reception of my bride and her mother on the ensuing day, and busied myself as only a lover can do, in seeing everything set in order. For the first time since my poor mother's death the house assumed a cheerful aspect. Several articles of modern fashion and elegance had been sent down from London to render the apartments allotted for my bride more suitable to her age and taste, and I took almost a childish pleasure in placing them. Nothing was neglected that could administer to

the comfort of my future mother-in-law. It was a relief to the remorse that haunted me, to show her all the duty and affection of a son, as an atonement for the affliction I had involuntarily drawn on her. It was this sentiment which had induced me to overrule all her objections to give up her own house and to become an inmate of mine, where she could enjoy the constant society and attention of her only daughter, and be relieved from all the cares of housekeeping. Mrs. Burnet, who entertained a sincere affection for her, was greatly pleased with this arrangement, and did all in her power to contribute to its being carried satisfactorily into effect. Two chambers, opening into each other, and on the same floor with mine, were fitted up as a bed-room and sitting-room for Mrs. Maitland. Comfortable sofas and easy-chairs were placed in each, for the use of the invalid, her *pris-Dieu* stood near her bed; Mrs. Burnet, who was well acquainted with her personal habits, having attended to all these matters. I looked around when everything had been completed, and was struck with the air of elegance and comfort which the whole house presented. I felt sure it would be a most agreeable surprise to my sweet Louisa, and that the pains I had taken to render her mother's apartments all that could be desired, would be received by her as the most delicate and acceptable proof of affection to herself. A cook had been engaged from the next town, a few days before, and the savoury odours sent forth from the kitchen, bore evidence that she was busy in culinary arrangements for the wedding dinner. In short, all wore the aspect of preparation and cheerfulness, for though occasionally the good-natured face of Mrs. Burnet would be clouded by a momentary sadness at the thought of her departed mistress, who, had she lived, would have been so well pleased at my marriage, or, by the recollection of the mysterious fate of the lovely creature whom she had loved since her early childhood, she saw much to be thankful for in the coming union, and hailed it with unfeigned satisfaction. I left

my house to dine and spend the evening with my future bride, rejoicing at the thought that this was to be the last time I should leave her at night. I found her with the traces of tears in her beautiful eyes, and felt chilled at the sight. Was there so little sympathy between us that, while I was rejoicing in the anticipation of the coming day, and the happiness it would bring me, she had passed the hours in weeping? Something of my annoyance was revealed in my face, although my lips expressed nothing of it, and the quick eye of affection instantly detected the feeling. Louisa placed her hand in mine, and leaning her lovely face on my shoulder, said: —

"Do not, dearest, be offended by my tears. In the preparations for leaving the home of my childhood, I have had to open drawers never looked into since the fatal evening that snatched from me a sister so dearly, fondly loved, that not even the happiness in store for me, in a union with you, can check the renewed agony awakened in my breast by the sight of these memorials of her; and I wonder how I have been able to overcome, in a few brief months, the anguish of such a blow, sufficiently to think of happiness, nay, to have felt it. Oh! my beloved, how engrossing must my attachment to you have been, when I could forget *her*, even for an hour?" and here a fresh shower of grief streamed down the cheeks of the lovely girl.

Every one of these tears seemed to inflict a wound on my heart. I pressed Louisa to my breast, and, melted into tenderness by her deep emotion, which but too powerfully excited my remorse for its cause, I mingled my tears with hers. How exquisitely constituted—how nobly generous is the heart of woman! No sooner did this delicate creature feel my warm tears fall on her brow, than, raising her head, and looking at me with a glance of unutterable tenderness, she exclaimed,—

"Forgive me, dearest, for inflicting pain on you. Your sympathy is a balm for every wound, and when I see you weep for

her, whom, had you known, you would have loved, a new bond of affection seems added to that which already binds us. I have often thought, Marmaduke, that had you seen—had you known *her*—*she* must have been the object of your choice. Your dear mother had selected *her* to be your wife, not, I do believe, that she liked her better than me, for she displayed no more affection for one than the other, but because she was the elder. Yes; you must have preferred Frances; for though we were always considered to be very much alike, she was so superior to me in every way, that near her, I must have passed unnoticed."

I replied that Louisa would always have been the object of my choice; that, from the first moment I had beheld her, I loved her. She was soothed by these avowals; and with a charming *naïveté* said,

"I have sometimes trembled at the notion that had you preferred my lost Frances, how dreadful would have been my fate; for, I could not have helped loving you. But I would have locked up the secret in my own heart for ever. I never would have let any human being know it. God alone, to whom I would confess it in my prayers, should have been acquainted with the fact, and *He*, perhaps, would have given me courage to bear it."

Even now, though many a long year has passed away, though age has cast its snows on my hair, and chilled the heart once so warm, I still seem to behold the blushing cheek and tear-dewed eyes of my beautiful Louisa, as she uttered the words I have repeated.

"Be assured, my beloved," said I, "that *you*, and *you* only, would have been the object of my tenderness, and the probability is, your sister would not have regarded me with the partial eyes that you do."

"Oh! yes, she must have loved you; our tastes in all things were so exactly the same, that I feel certain on this point. And yet, to-day, on opening her desk, I found a little book in which

she sometimes entered down her thoughts, and on casting my eyes over the well-known characters, I was struck with some passages, that for the first time made me doubt whether she might have felt towards you as I do. Read the lines, dearest. To-morrow you will be her brother, and it is no sacrilege, that the eyes that have wept her loss with me should behold them."

I trembled while I took the book, yet I dared not decline reading the passage pointed out to me, lest, by so doing, I should wound or offend my sweet Louisa. The following were the lines:—

"I inadvertently overheard Mrs. Herbert this day speaking to my dear mother on the subject of her desire, that I should be the wife of her son. I have sometimes suspected from hints passing between them, that she had some idea of this, but never understood it so plainly before. How strange it is that an involuntary shudder passed over my frame as I listened, and every time I have thought of it since. I am told he is handsome, agreeable, and possesses sensibility. Why, then, should I feel this instinctive dread of him? This unaccountable presentiment that in some way or other, evil will come to me by him, or through him. It is childish—it is weak to give way to such strange fancies—nevertheless, this particular one has taken such strong hold of me, that I cannot shake it off."

My hand trembled, and I felt myself turn faint as I read these lines. How awful—how prophetic had been her fears, and how fearfully had they been fulfilled? Poor girl! Why had not some good angel kept me from crossing her path, or from yielding to the impulse to press my lips to her brow?

"Was it not strange, dearest," said Louisa, "that my dear, lost sister should have had this superstitious dread of you? But the truth is, poor Frances was, like most susceptible and delicately organized persons, disposed to be superstitious; to prove which, I will show you some other passages in this little book."

And she took it from my hand, and having turned over some of its leaves, drew my attention to the following lines: —

"For some months, I have been haunted by a presentiment that I am doomed to an early death. No feeling of indisposition —no symptom of any malady exists, to account for this dread; nevertheless, it constantly oppresses me. Even in my dreams I am conscious of it. I love to be alone; yet, in solitude, a brooding melancholy comes over me, such as a loving heart must experience on the eve of bidding an eternal farewell to all most dear to it. When I behold the opening day, I ask myself whether I may not pass away from life before its close, and when the sun is setting, it occurs to me, that I may never more see its rising. My reason tells me, that every human being is equally subject as I am to the uncertainty of life. All know it, but others cannot be so deeply, so awfully impressed by it as I am, or they could not enjoy existence as they do. And yet, who ever loved this fair world more tenderly than I—who ever was more tremblingly alive to its charms? The bright, the glorious sun; the beautiful, the pensive moon, how do I feel their influence! The azure mountains, veiling their heads in the clouds; the noble trees, waving their branches to the sighing wind; the rushing cataract, sending its snowy foam over the rocks, that would in vain impede its course; the green fields, and wild flowers that bedeck them, each, and all, fill me with delight, and bring tears of thankfulness to *Him* who made them, to my eyes; but even when their charms are most keenly felt, comes the thought that I must soon leave them for ever, and I glance around to bid them a tearful farewell.

"How often, when gazing on the beloved faces of my mother and my sister, do I shudder lest I should be suddenly snatched from them. Oh! ye so dear to me, should my sad, sad presentiment be one day fulfilled, accept these lines, traced with a trembling hand, and on which my tears fall, as an adieu. While I write, I hear the voice of my sweet sister singing one of my fa-

vourite songs to our mother; a thin partition only separates us. I will leave these sad thoughts, and go and embrace them, grateful to God that I can still do so."

Louisa's eyes perused the lines, while mine followed them. Her tears streamed down her cheeks, and mine rushed to my eyes.

"You see, my dear Marmaduke," murmured the lovely girl, "that my dear, lost sister, was very superstitious; but, alas! how have her fears been realized? — I, too, feel a vague dread of future sorrow steal over me ever since her mysterious fate. May heaven avert any greater affliction, if, indeed, a greater can occur."

Every word uttered by my sweet Louisa inflicted a pang on my heart, and sounded like the knell of departing hope. I had entered the house, elated by the anticipation of my approaching happiness, and expecting to see the face of my beloved dressed in smiles to receive me. But how had I found her? Pale, and with eyes swollen from weeping! How unlike a bride about to be wedded to the object of her affection! How badly this argued for my ill-starred nuptials! Then the sad forbodings traced by the hand of the departed Frances; — forbodings, alas! how terribly fulfilled! Oh! if Louisa could but dream of the part I had in the fearful death of the sister she doted on, how would she shrink back affrighted from the altar, and fly from my sight! The mother, too, whose pallid lips every day pressed my brow with a maternal kiss, what would her feelings be, could she divine that mine had profanely dared to touch the forehead of her lost daughter, a brief moment ere, terrified by that profanation, she had, in her flight to avoid me, met a violent death! What a prospect for the future did the union of the coming morrow, hold out! Three persons united by holy ties — who ought to have no mystery, no concealment from each other — yet, one of these three, fully conscious

that if the other two knew the terrible secret locked up in his breast, they would shun, if they did not curse him.

All these thoughts awoke in my mind, as I looked on the pale and weeping girl before me. It was yet time to fly from her presence, ere the knot was tied that must bind her destiny to that of the involuntary destroyer of her sister. Yet dolt, fool, and selfish as I was, I had not courage to abandon this lovely being, and I silenced the scruples that conscience urged, by mentally pledging myself that my whole life should be devoted to the atonement of the one fatal sin of my existence, by my unceasing efforts to render my future wife and mother-in-law happy. I knew not then, blinded as I was by an all-engrossing passion, that to render those dear to us happy, we must have the only secure basis for happiness in our own hearts — a spotless conscience, and no secrets. The heart and mind must be open as day to the wife of our bosom, so that should a cloud arise, she may be able to understand its cause, if not to dispel it. No guard must be placed on the lips, — one must be able to *think aloud* with the partner of our joys and sorrows.

Could this be my case? Alas! No! Henceforth I must be ever on the watch, lest I should betray my terrible secret. Even in my sleep, there would be no security for me; and the undying grief of those with whom my future life was to be passed, would, I now foresaw, for ever keep alive the remembrance of the dread catastrophe I had occasioned. The veil placed by love seemed removed from my eyes. The future was shaded by the most sombre hues. I felt that oblivion of my sin was hopeless, while brought in such close contact with those who must every hour of my life recall it to my memory. But it was now too late to draw back from the engagement, of which the morrow was to witness the ratification. How could my withdrawing from it be accounted for? I had won the virgin heart of one of the fairest, and most faultless of women — a woman, whose qualities and dispo-

sition were calculated to render any attachment she formed enduring. *Her* peace must fall a sacrifice to the breaking off of our engagement, at the very day fixed for its fulfilment; and could I, as a man of honour, or a man of feeling, resolve on such a measure now? With the vanity from which none of my sex is exempt, I believed that so strong must be the attachment I had inspired, that misery, if not death, must ensue to Louisa, if I broke off our marriage. I cheated myself into the belief, that *I* could make the sacrifice of resigning *her*, so prone are we to give ourselves credit for a heroism and abnegation of self, of which we are little capable; and while thus reasoning, the indulgence of my own passion had, I fear, much more weight in my decision, than a consideration for its result on hers.

All the while that I tried to think that the non-fulfilment of our engagement must inflict misery on Louisa, the dread of losing her at the very moment she was to be given to my longing arms, was what most influenced my conduct. No! The die was cast; I would wed her on the morrow, come what might; and the possession of such a creature could not, I felt persuaded, fail in chasing gloom and unhappiness away. My love, my tenderness, and unceasing attention would, *must* render her happy, and in time banish painful recollections from her mind; and the reflection of her happiness must restore and establish mine. Inspired by these new-born hopes, I pressed my beauteous Louisa in my arms, implored her not to render me wretched by the indulgence of her grief at the approach of our wedding-day, and she, soothed by my tenderness, smiled on me through her tears, and reverted no more during the day to the subject that had reopened her grief, although I saw, by her occasional change of colour and pensive countenance, that her thoughts were with the dead.

CHAPTER XIV.

My sleep was troubled, and my dreams haunted that night. I seemed to stand before the altar with my beloved, her hand clasped in mine; and I was on the point of placing the nuptial ring on her delicate finger, when suddenly the shade of her sister arose up between us, and with a stern countenance waved me from her presence. In vain I strove to retain my place, to grasp the hand of my bride; the shadowy, but menacing figure of the dead always interposed between us to prevent the performance of the sacred ceremony; and gasping, trembling, with the cold drops of perspiration falling from my brow, I started from slumber in an agony of horror. Good heavens! if such fearful visions were to haunt my couch when my bride became a sharer of it, how dreadful would be my position, and how might I betray the fatal secret! I left my bed. I walked up and down my chamber, tried to reason myself out of the terror my dreams had inspired: but my efforts to conquer it were in vain; for, when tired and exhausted, I again dropped into sleep, the same dreams returned, until, unable any longer to support them, I left my pillow at early morn, and sought in the fresh air to cool my fevered brow, and recover my self-possession.

"I hope, Sir, you are not ill," said the worthy Mrs. Burnet, when we met; "but you look so pale and haggard, that I am sure you have not slept."

I muttered some excuse for my altered looks, walked from room to room to see that all was ready for the reception of my bride and her mother, and then set out to conduct them to the church, where the nuptial ceremony was to be performed. They

had laid aside their mourning dresses in honour of the day; but the laying by mourning occasions almost as much sadness as the putting it on, by reminding the wearer of the person for whose loss it had been assumed.

Louisa looked pale, and her eyes retained the traces of tears. Her mother always, since the loss of her daughter, grave and pensive, was unusually so on this occasion, and I felt my spirits oppressed with gloom as I witnessed the too evident symptoms of the depression of theirs. Was this like a nuptial morning? I asked myself, hurt and disappointed by this sadness. Was this, which I expected to be the happiest day of my life, to be ushered in with sighs and tears? Such were the reflections which my selfishness suggested; and I felt more disposed to be offended with my gentle bride for the demonstrations of sorrow which she vainly sought to conceal, than to soothe her by my tenderness. With all a woman's intuitive quickness of perception, she saw that I was mortified; and, with a feminine delicacy and tact that must have disarmed the sternest of my sex, she laid her beautiful white hand on my arm, and whispered — "Forgive me, dearest, if on the day that unites us, with so much cause for joy, I have wept; but I could not chase *her* image from my mind, recalled so freshly and vividly to it by the passages we read yesterday, and by the view of the dresses in which I have so often seen her attired: as I looked on them, I could hardly bring myself to believe she was gone for ever — that I should never see her more!"

Several of our humble neighbours, to each and all of whom Mrs. Maitland and her daughters had been endeared by acts of kindness, were in the church to witness our marriage. Louisa pronounced the sacred vows with an unfaltering voice, for which, in my heart, I thanked her; mine was, I fear, less firm: and when I attempted to place the ring on her finger, I was in such a tremor that it fell from my trembling hand. Louisa turned pale at this incident, but the ring was soon found; I put it on her

finger: and when I pressed my lips to hers, I would not have changed places with the proudest monarch on earth. We received the warm congratulations of our worthy pastor and of the individuals of his flock in our immediate neighbourhood, and felt cheered by the unfeigned good-will they evinced on the occasion. The former had promised to partake our wedding dinner, and we took leave of our humble friends at the church door, to return to our home.

The walk from the church to our residence was but a short one; nevertheless, such was the langour and increased weakness of my mother-in-law, that, though aided by the support of my arm and that of her daughter, she advanced so slowly that it took us a considerable time to reach our own door. How I longed to instal my bride in the home her presence was henceforth to adorn! How impatient I felt to know whether the alterations and improvements I had made in the rooms, and the new and tasteful furniture I had placed in them, would please her. I counted every minute that fled — nay, every step of our progress, anticipating the surprise and satisfaction the arrangements I had made would afford; and my sweet Louisa, guessing and sympathising with my feelings, had banished every trace of gloom and sorrow from her beautiful face, and repaid me for my affectionate care to her parent by the sweetest smiles and fondest glances.

"Ah! there is our home!" exclaimed she; "how picturesque, how cheerful it looks! How beautifully the creepers have grown around the rustic porch; how well they look enwreathing the windows of our home! May God send down a blessing on it and us, and long preserve our dear, dear mother, to crown our happiness by her presence!"

And the gentle, affectionate creature turned and embraced her parent, into whose eyes tears started, which she turned away her head to conceal. Mrs. Burnet came forth to welcome us, and led the way into the dining-room, where a neatly-served and

tempting collation awaited us, and where I embraced my bride and her mother before they seated themselves to partake of it. Everything was found to be delicious. The ladies, at my entreaties, even consented to drink a little wine, a very unusual thing with them, and I then proceeded to show them their separate apartments. My mother-in-law's was the first we entered, and so pleased was she with the neatness and comfort of its arrangements, that she affectionately pressed my hand as she declared that nothing had been forgotten.

"How thoughtful, how kind, my dear son," added she; while Louisa, touched to the heart by my forethought and consideration for her parent's comfort, threw herself into my arms and pressed me to her heart. I then led them to the rooms prepared for my bride, with which they expressed themselves to be charmed; though Louisa's blushing cheek and downcast eyes revealed that the timidity and maidenly reserve so natural to her position checked the expressions of pleased surprise to which she had given utterance on beholding the chamber of her mother. Then the drawing-room, and small, but well-stored library, were examined. These had been entirely new-furnished, and enlarged by bay-windows, which greatly improved them.

"How tasteful, how elegant, how comfortable!" burst from both mother and daughter.

"Here are your chairs, dear mother," said I, pointing out a *bergère* in each of the rooms, with abundant pillows to prop up her weak frame, and an ease-and-comfort to each, to support her legs, while a small table was placed within reach, to hold whatever she might require.

These new proofs of thoughtfulness and consideration for the comfort of her parent delighted Louisa. She thanked me with a kiss impressed on my brow; and her mother prayed God to bless me, adding that I had all my dear mother's good nature and tact in providing for the comfort of those dear to her. The pleasure

afforded by an examination of their new home had exhilarated the spirits of my wife and mother. For the first time since I had known them I saw smiles brighten their countenances, and I hailed this change as a good omen of future happiness, for which I was truly grateful.

How lovely looked my bride! her delicate fairness often illumined by a rosy blush, as I whispered passionate vows of love in her ear. I felt the happiest of mortals; for I forgot in the excess of my affection, and the delight of now calling my own the beautiful creature by my side, the one dark spot that had for so many months clouded my days and embittered my nights; I forgot the gloomy cavern and new-made grave where I had so lately deposited the mortal remains of one who, had I not crossed her path, would have now been as fair and blooming as my bride, a witness and partaker of our happiness. All this was forgotten while looking in the soft and loving eyes of my own Louisa, and I blessed her for this power of banishing from my thoughts every object but herself. And yet, while blessing her for banishing from my mind the one dark cloud that obscured its sunshine, back came the sorrowful remembrance. The lonely and unsanctified grave in the cavern! with its decaying tenant uncoffined, unanealed, — wrapped not in the garments of the honoured dead, but in those worn in life, with nought to preserve that once beautiful form from contact with the reptiles that prey upon the dead, but the cloak and coarse matting in which I had enveloped it! What a sad, sad contrast did the cheerful, well-appointed, and luxurious home, to which I had brought one of the sisters, offer to the grave to which I had consigned the other! I shuddered as the thought passed through my brain, but sought to chase it by trying to fix my attention solely on the present. But remorse is not to be defrauded of its rights; and even on this, that should have been the brightest day of my life, dark clouds intervened to shadow it.

And now the hour appointed for dinner approached. Our worthy pastor arrived, and the faithful Mrs. Burnet tapped at the door to inquire whether dinner might be served, when a man on horseback rode rapidly up to the gate, of which one of the windows of the room we were sitting in, commanded a view, and rang the bell loudly. A presentiment of evil tidings made me shudder; and yet, what bad news had I to apprehend? All my happiness was comprised in the lovely creature before me; and while she was near me, well in health, loving, — and oh! how beloved! — what had I to fear? Nevertheless I *did* fear, as all must, who, in the brief space allowed for perfect happiness, to pause with them, tremble at every incident, however trivial, lest it should prove an interruption.

"Good God!" exclaimed Louisa, turning pale as marble, who can this stranger be, and what brings him here to-day?"

"A stranger," repeated her mother. "Oh! heaven be praised. Perhaps he brings me tidings of my child," and, trembling with emotion, she arose from her chair and hurried to the entrance-hall, followed by Louisa and our pastor. For me, overpowered by her words, which brought the whole scene of the late burial again before me, the thought flashed across my mind, that this stranger must be in some way or other connected with a discovery, and I reeled, and would have fallen to the ground, had I not grasped the back of a sofa, near which I had been standing. I trembled, gasped for breath, and felt so faint, that, although fully aware of how strange my absence from my wife and mother must appear at such a moment, I could hardly totter to the hall to join them. I found Mrs. Maitland in an agony of grief, supported by our pastor and my Louisa, who herself, pale as death, and tears streaming down her cheeks, was vainly endeavouring to soothe her unhappy parent. I feared to approach them, but Louisa, seeing me enter the hall uttered my name in a tone of

such mingled grief and tenderness, that I rushed towards her, and she fell fainting into my arms.

"Yes, Sir," said the stranger, a rude-looking and uncouth man, who, on observing a fresh listener arrive, thought it incumbent on him to repeat his story, "the body of the young lady has been found, and no later than this very morning. Ever since the reward was offered, many have kept a sharp look out, but it was my good luck to find it, and so I galloped off as fast as I could to bring the news. I went first to the house these here ladies lately occupied, but was told, as how, there had been a wedding to-day, and that they were come here to live. Well, says I to myself, this is a queer world, one daughter wanting a burial, while t'other is a marrying, and so I come off here."

This unhappy and unfeeling allusion, produced a fresh paroxysm of grief in the mother and daughter, that made me feel as though I could have annihilated the wretch who had occasioned it.

"Be silent," exclaimed I, angrily.

"Why, how can I tell those, whom my business is with, all the partiklars of how the body was found with the face half eaten by the fishes, and clothes gone all to pieces, and the long hair entangled with the gravel, rushes, and stones."

"Hold your tongue, wretch, monster," said I, half phrenzied by witnessing the terrible effect produced on my wife and mother-in-law, on hearing these fearful particulars. So tremendous was it, that I would have given boundless wealth, had I possessed it, to have been able to remove the horrible impression from their minds, by assuring them that the face of her they mourned had never been defiled or disfigured save by the natural decay that follows death, and that it had been consigned with tenderness to an earthly grave—that no profane eye had gazed on it, no rude hand touched it, and that fervent and heartfelt prayers, however unworthy the lips that breathed them, had been offered

up to the throne of Grace, when the corpse had been consigned to the grave. But these consolatory truths my cruel destiny had for ever precluded me from uttering, and I wrung my hands in torture, as I felt how powerless I was to afford relief to the agonized hearts of those so dear to me. Assisted by the pastor and Mrs. Burnet, I conducted them back to the drawing-room, followed, in spite of my angry reproaches, by the callous messenger, loudly urging his claims to the offered reward for finding the body, that I well knew was deposited in the earth.

"It may not, after all, my dear Madam," said the pastor, wishing to mitigate the mother's grief and horror, "be the corpse of your daughter."

"But I maintain that it is," interrupted the messenger of evil tidings, "and so does every one who has seen it, for though the eyes and nose are gone and the rest of the face greatly disfigured by the hungry fishes, still, any one can see that the body is that of a very pretty young girl, and as no one else in this parish has been missing, it must be your daughter's, and I must be paid for my trouble."

"Retire to the hall," said I, frantic at hearing the feelings of my wife and mother harrowed by the fearful details of this man. "You shall receive your reward in a few minutes."

"But who is to pay the man as helped me to drag the body out of the water, and who took it to the barn where it is now lying?" demanded he.

"Go, leave the room, all shall be paid, but don't say another word."

"Ah! I see well enough how it is," replied the monster. "Ye are all vexed enough to have the pleasures of the wedding-day interrupted, and the feasting on all the good things, the smell of which is enough to make an alderman hungry, by my bringing you news you didn't want to hear, when you had all made up your minds to making merry, Sure it's enough to melt

a heart of stone to think that while ye are all dressed out so fine, and living in clover here, the poor girl that ye don't as much as wear a black rag for, is lying on a barn floor, and may be at this minute receiving as bad usage from the rats, as she got from the fishes."

My mother-in-law, overpowered with horror, fell fainting on the sofa, while my poor Louisa was seized with a violent fit of hysterics. I rushed on the wretch, and would have felled him to the earth, but our pastor ran between us, and pulling him by the arm out of the room, while pointing to the two unhappy women who required my care, told me not to leave them.

And this was my wedding-day, that day so longed for, that was to have been the happiest one of my life! Never was there a house in which grief, dismay, and horror reigned more triumphantly than in mine. On whichever side I looked, faces bathed in tears met my sight, and hysterical sobs and groans, my ear. I was almost maddened, yet in the midst of my despair the consciousness that all this wretchedness had been the result of my folly, my sin, added poignancy to my tortures. Had I not concealed the corpse, it would have long, long since been discovered — would have received the rites of the church — would have been interred in consecrated ground — the grave might have been wept over by those who had doted on its tenant, and time, that sole healer of grief, would have, by this hour, softened down the agony, to the effects of which I was now a witness, to a tender, pensive recollection of *one* never to be forgotten. When restored to consciousness, the first words uttered by my wife and mother expressed their intention of immediately setting out for Pendine, to pay the last mournful duties to the dead.

"Take off these white dresses," said Mrs. Maitland, "and let me put on the mourning habiliments that never ought to have been laid aside until the fate of my lost child had been ascertained."

"Yes, let us go to her," sobbed my poor Louisa, so changed by grief that few would have recognized in the pale and trembling creature, deluged in tears, the lovely being, who, but two hours before, two little hours, was a blooming bride, smiling on her happy husband.

I went to my desk, took out gold enough to satisfy the rapacious wretch whose visit had turned my home from the abode of content to the house of mourning; and having dismissed him, I entreated our pastor to join his entreaties to mine, to persuade my wife and mother not to go to Pendine. I felt that the sight of the mutilated and fearful corpse described by him who had found it, would be a shock fatal to both—an opinion in which he fully agreed. Long and difficult was our task ere we could induce them to abandon their project, and allow me to go in their stead, accompanied by an old and faithful attendant of Mrs. Maitland, who had been the nurse of her daughters, the pastor promising not to leave the mourners until my return. The nurse was to take with her linen and suitable habiliments for the dead, which were to be put on by her; and no strange eyes were to behold the corpse, or strange hands to be employed to assist her.

I bade farewell to my bride, leaving her so overwhelmed in grief, that my departure seemed hardly noticed by her, so deep was her renewed affliction for her sister; and I, selfish as I was, felt hurt and wounded that she could see me leave her without betraying any increased emotion. *Love*, which reigned supreme in *my* heart, was, for the time being, eclipsed in hers, by awakened sisterly affection, and I, self-engrossed, could blame instead of sympathizing with her.

"Let the remains of my child be brought back and laid in a grave in the church-yard here, where mine will soon follow them," said the heart-broken mother, "or if you would have no

objection, I should wish my lost child to be interred in your family vault, near my dear departed friend,—your mother."

How could I refuse so natural a request, now that we were one family, and yet, to let the body of an utter stranger, of whose life or conduct we knew nothing, be intruded into the same vault with my parents, seemed to me nothing short of sacrilege and an insult to them. Nevertheless, to this I must submit, for nothing could induce me to wound the already lacerated feelings of my unhappy mother-in-law, which I must have done, had I refused her request.

CHAPTER XV.

The shades of night had obscured the surrounding scene, when, accompanied by the faithful nurse, I left my now wretched home. The gloomy prospect accorded but too well with what was passing in my heart, and a superstitious presentiment that my future dreams and hopes of happiness would be frustrated and turned to misery, as were those of that day, filled my soul. Absorbed in moody reflections, I sank back in the carriage, reminded only by the sobs of my companion, that I was not alone. At length I conquered my reluctance to break silence by addressing a few words of kindness to the poor nurse, and this manifestation of sympathy opened her oppressed heart, and she gave vent to her feelings.

"Ah, Sir, had you known her — so beautiful, so gentle, and so good, you would not wonder at my sorrow. She was even when on earth an angel, and was too perfect to be long left us here. But to think of those delicate and fair limbs, — that lovely face, which no one ever looked on without admiring, — that long, soft, and flowing hair, I have so often combed and brushed with pride, being exposed to the impure water for long months, and to the ravenous and unclean creatures that dwell therein! Oh, it is too, too horrible, and almost deprives me of reason."

And here the poor woman gave way to an agony of grief. What, thought I, if she should discover that the body is *not* that of Miss Maitland? And then a secret dread crept over me that such a discovery might lead not only to all the prolonged sufferings of suspense, but to continued researches for the corpse, destroying all hope of happiness for months, nay, for years to

come. With the selfish intention of warding off this threatened misery, I, after reminding my weeping companion that all injuries inflicted on the body after life had fled were unfelt by the dead, I tried, while my tremulous voice disproved my assumption of philosophical indifference on such a point, to make her think that whether the mouldering flesh of the departed was fed on by the fishes of the water, or the reptiles of the earth, availed little. I remarked that probably no trace of resemblance might be found between the corpse we were to inter and the beauteous girl she so well remembered.

"Yes, Sir," replied she, "I've been thinking of that, and have prepared myself for it. I recollect in my youth seeing the body of a woman who had been drowned, after it had been some weeks in the water, and it was so terribly altered that her friends could not recognize it, and only knew it to be hers by the dress, though that, too, was in a sad state."

A new dread crossed my mind, — might not the clothes of the corpse prove that it was not that of Miss Maitland? It was true that the man who had found the body had said that they were nearly destroyed; but might not the fragments betray their texture, if not colour? This dread haunted me during the rest of the journey, and while the nurse believed I was absorbed by regret, I was wholly occupied in thinking how to remedy this new cause of alarm. Never were three hours more wretchedly passed than those of our journey. Directed by an innkeeper, on the look out for the arrival of one of the family, we proceeded to the barn in the environs of the other side of the town.

"Had the persons who found the body come to me, Sir," said the innkeeper, "I should certainly have had it moved to my house, and shown the proper respect to it; but I knew nothing of the matter for some time; when I did, I had a decent coffin, lined with flannel, made, and the body placed in it; and I took on myself — I hope I have done right — to have the torn fragments

of clothes that still hung to the corpse burned, for fear of their causing infection."

The weight of a mountain seemed removed from my heart at this disclosure.

"What colour was the dress, and was the linen fine?" demanded the nurse, in great trepidation.

"Both were in such a state as to render it impossible to recognize their colour or quality," was the reply. "I had the poor remains wrapped in a pair of fine sheets of mine; don't be alarmed, Ma'am," (seeing the nurse start,) "it was all done by a woman's hands, — although, to confess the truth, the operation required no little courage, such was the fearful state of decomposition in which the body was."

"Alas! alas! and shall I not be able to look on the corpse?" said the nurse.

"I don't think you could support it, Ma'am; but if you wish it, you can have the lid of the coffin removed, for it is not yet screwed down," replied the innkeeper.

"Then I will see it," sobbed the nurse.

And together we entered the miserable barn, where the coffin was placed on a table, with a few candles scattered around to dispel the darkness, but which only partially effected that object, leaving the greater portion of the large and rude room in deep shadow. Nothing could be more gloomy, more desolate, than the whole aspect of the barn. The servant, placed in it to watch by the dead, remained as far distant from the coffin as she could, while the finder of the body stood in the back ground, ready to prove, in case any doubt of its identity was offered, that it was, and could be no other than that of the missing young lady, and wholly and solely because no one else had been missed from the neighbourhood. The faithful nurse approached the coffin, trembling so violently that I was compelled to support her. The lid was removed, — the top of the sheet that covered the

head of the dead was drawn aside, and a face that scarcely retained a vestige of that of a human being, so fearful had been the ravages of the fishes and of decomposition — met our view. The nurse uttered a loud shriek, and fell, fainting, in my arms, while the finder of the body, who had advanced towards the spot where it now rested, exclaimed, with a triumphant glance, "I knew she would identify it at a glance. Sure, the body of a common person never could be mistaken for that of a lady. I saw in a minute that the corpse was a gentlewoman."

"Yes, because a reward had been offered for finding the body of a young lady," observed the servant of the innkeeper, looking disdainfully at him; "and had you found that of a man, you would have equally tried to persuade us it was that of the missing lady."

"Why you can't pretend to say this is not the body of the lady?" demanded the fellow, looking daggers at her. "All I can say," replied the woman, "is, that it is the body of a female, but whether of gentle or simple, I cannot even guess, so terrible is the state in which it is."

"Have the coffin nailed down instantly," said I, "for I would not have this poor woman again behold that dreadful sight."

My orders were instantly complied with, while yet the nurse was in a state of insensibility, and I had her removed to the inn.

"I thought, Sir," said the servant of the innkeeper, "that perhaps the poor mother of the dead might like to have a lock of the hair, so I cut one off, and have carefully washed it. Here it is." And she took from her pocket a paper, in which a long tress of hair, as unlike both in colour and texture that of Miss Maitland as it was possible to be; but I, nevertheless, took it, and liberally rewarded her for the trouble she had taken.

I then gave instructions for having the coffin provided by the innkeeper placed in one more suited to the position of the family to which the dead was erroneously supposed to belong, ordered a hearse to convey it to the village church on the following

day, and proceeded to the inn, where I found the poor nurse returned to consciousness, but so weak and nervous, that I compelled her to drink a glass of wine and retire to bed; after which I wrote a letter to my bride, stating the steps I had taken, and at what hour the mournful convoy would reach the church the following day.

This was the first letter I had ever addressed to my sweet Louisa; for, being in the habit of seeing her every day during the last few months, I had no occasion to write. And now, it was decreed that the first letter she was to receive from me — and written on the day of our marriage too — was to be one in which a deep sympathy for her grief precluded those expressions of passionate tenderness which filled my heart. Strange destiny, to be called away from her the very day that made her mine, and to be unable to touch on the torture the separation caused me; nay, even to feel that our meeting on the morrow would be, under existing circumstances, as mournful as our parting had been the previous one. How clouded, how sorrowful would our honeymoon be! — that epoch, that oasis in the desert of man's life looked forward to by all men who marry for love as "*les plus beaux jours de leur vie.*" But what right had I to count on a single day, nay, a single hour of happiness, after having caused the death of a fellow-creature by my folly, and entangled myself in a tissue of falsehood, from the meshes of which I felt it would be difficult, if not impossible, to escape.

There is no punishment so severe as that which results from our own misdeeds, for the self-reproach that follows them adds tenfold bitterness to their consequences. Had I not concealed the body of my victim, it must have been discovered where it fell, within a few hours after, and ere this Time would have softened the pangs of grief, and I might have hoped to enjoy a happy home; but, now reversing the case quoted by Hamlet, the preparations for the marriage-feast were to furnish forth the funeral baked meats, and Death, always so awful, had broken in on

my anticipated paradise, mocking my hopes, and scaring away my dreams of love.

Such was the selfishness of my nature, that willingly would I, had it been possible, have remained absent from my bride until time had soothed the poignancy of her sorrow, and that she could receive me with smiles, so great was my dread of witnessing the grief I had brought on her, and of being robbed by it of the happiness I had looked forward to on my marriage. I was jealous, yes, absolutely, selfishly jealous, that my bride could be wholly engrossed by sorrow during the first hours of our union. Ought she not to have conquered her regret, and have thought only of me at such a time? To this unreasonable extent can selfishness urge those who yield to its blameable, its ignoble sway, rendering them insensible to the feelings of those best beloved, instead of opening their hearts to sympathy. I counted the long hours on my sleepless pillow, until, worn out, I fell into a feverish and unrefreshing slumber, from which I awoke paralyzed by terror, large drops of cold perspiration dropping from my brow, and my aching tembles throbbing rapidly. I dreamt that I had been absent, and returned to my bride. Her rapturous delight at our meeting could only be equalled by mine. She was in her bridal bed, looking more lovely, more exquisitely beautiful than I had ever imagined aught of mortal birth could be; and she called to me, saying, "Come, my beloved; why tarriest thou from thy bride, thine own Louisa?" I rushed to embrace her with all a lover's ardour, when, lo! her beautiful face suddenly changed to the disfigured and dreadful one of the festering corpse I had seen in the coffin, the lacerated arms of which were flung around my neck to prevent escape; and so closely did they press my throat that I felt suffocation coming on, until, with a mighty effort, I burst the bonds of sleep, and, springing from the hated couch, stood transfixed with horror in the middle of the chamber. Even now that I was awake, I could not shake off this fearful vision.

When I tried to remember the fair and lovely face of my bride, the mutilated and terrible one of the corpse seemed to be before me, producing a loathing and horror that almost drove me mad. And now the icy coldness of my frame was turned to a feverish heat. I bathed my burning temples with water, I drank off a glass of the same liquid, and again sought my pillow. But sleep visited it no more; and, ill at ease both in mind and body, I arose at an early hour, to see that all was prepared for the funeral, at which I, knowing that the dead was a nameless stranger, an alien to the two families in whose vault her remains were to repose, was to follow as chief mourner. Oh! how I hated myself for all this deception, this sacrilege towards the buried dead, my honoured father and mother. But it must be gone on with; my folly, my madness, had rendered it necessary to deceive my wife and mother-in-law.

When I met the faithful nurse in the morning, she reproached herself for not having fulfilled the commands of her mistress.

"Oh! Sir," said she, "who could have thought that the task I had undertaken could be so dreadful, so impracticable a one. Why, the very sight of the face almost stopped the current of life in my veins; and had I, as I intended, attempted to dress the dead in the habiliments I brought, I am quite sure I should have expired long before I could complete the operation. And to think that aught so lovely, so pure, when in life, could be reduced to that fearful object which we saw — oh! Sir, it is terrible! And poor human nature, however strong the love, cannot conquer the disgust and horror such sights inspire!"

"Do not, my good nurse, I implore you," said I, "relate to your mistress or to my wife, the dreadful state in which we found the dead. It would only shock them, and aggravate their sufferings."

"You are right, Sir, I wouldn't for the world do so. The

woman whom we found with the corpse, told me this morning, Sir, that she had cut off and washed a lock of her hair, and given it to you for my poor mistress. This is a great relief to me, who ought to have seen that this was done, but I forgot every thing in the sickness that came over me at that terrible sight."

"I have the lock of hair safe," replied I, fully resolved to substitute the ringlet, cut by my own hand from the beautiful tresses of the departed Frances, for the coarse hair, taken from the head of the corpse, which I had consigned to the fire the previous night. The kindness and attention I had shown to the nurse, had quite won her good will, but alas! this circumstance tended rather to increase my painful sensations than to diminish them, for she, poor soul, was continually dwelling on the perfections, mental and bodily, of her lost young lady, and relating anecdotes that awakened still more acutely my remorse and regret for having occasioned her death.

CHAPTER XVI.

The funeral procession, consisting of the hearse, with its white plumes, emblematical of the maiden state of her whose remains it was supposed to convey, and the coffin, the best that the town of Pendine could furnish, covered with a pall, reserved, as the undertaker took care to tell me, solely for the gentlefolk of the neighbourhood who happened to die in the country, moved slowly along, preceded and followed by two mutes on horseback, and a mourning coach containing the nurse and myself. During the whole route back, she never ceased talking of her dear lost young lady, little dreaming that every word she uttered inflicted a wound on my heart.

"Yes, Sir," said she, "I often used to say that the two young ladies were so exactly like each other, that they could hardly be known asunder. Why, their mother, and yours too, Sir, have often mistaken one for the other; and I, Sir, *I* who nursed them, could scarcely distinguish between them. Miss Maitland was of a more thoughtful nature like than Miss Louisa — Mrs. Herbert, I should say — but the troubles of yesterday had quite put your marriage out of my head. — God knows, yesterday was not much like a wedding-day, but we must bow to the will of God. Well, Sir, I used to say to my mistress, Miss Louisa is like a bright summer's morning, and Miss Maitland, like a summer's twilight, so sober, so serious; but when anything happened to make Miss Louisa grave or pensive, she looked so exactly like her sister, that it might puzzle any one to tell which was which; and ever since that sad, sad night, when Miss Maitland left the house never to return, Miss Louisa has grown more

like her every day, from the thoughtful look affliction has given to her handsome face. How well I remember that sad, sad night; I sate at an open window as Miss Maitland walked through the little shrubbery, and she looked so beautiful, that I could not help saying to myself, 'Well, your face must be like an angel's.' Ah! who could have supposed that I was never more to see that beautiful face? or that the terrible one I looked at in the coffin last night could be the same? She sung a hymn, Sir, that she was very fond of singing 'Ave Maria,' I think she called it, as she walked gently along; and would you believe it, Sir, there was something so mournful, yet so heavenly in her voice, that it brought tears into my eyes. That was the last time I was ever to hear it. Well, the will of God be done;" and here the poor woman wiped away the tears that streamed down her pale cheeks.

"How ever she could have fallen over the cliff, I never can imagine," resumed she after a pause. "She who knew every path, every step about the cottage, and was as sure-footed as a goat, Sir, one might say. And yet there is no other way to account for her death, woe 's me, for there was not a creature, man, woman, or child, that would have hurt a hair of her head, so well beloved was she in the whole parish. She was always fond of rambling about alone in the summer's evenings, just as if she wanted to converse with the stars, or the angels above 'em. She used to say when her mother spoke of it, it composed her thoughts for bed-time, and made her sleep better. I 've often thought she had, some how or other, a notion she should not live long, blessed creature! there was something so mild and angelic about her. Well, she 's in heaven, and that must be our consolation. Ah, Sir, what a different thing it is to think of the dead, sleeping quietly in their shrouds, with the same calm face we have looked on when they slept, in life, and to see them, when the poor clay is mouldering away, as we saw last

night. God be thanked, my poor mistress and Miss Louisa did not see it!"

Here our arrival at the church-yard gate put a stop to the poor nurse's reminiscences. The church-yard was filled by the rustic neighbours, all the women in tears, and the men with grave countenances. Not one of them had forgotten the fair creature, who, six months before, had moved in health and beauty among their cottages, with a kind word and sweet smile for all, and consequently the sight of the hearse, with its white plumes, and the coffin supposed to hold the remains of her they had so often admired, affected them all deeply. The season too — spring — that time of promise, when nature puts forth its buds, had made its appearance, and there is something so analogous between it and youth, that when the young descend to the dark grave just as earth is bursting to give its verdure, that the song of birds enlivens the air, and gleams of sunshine warm it, when the very showers are like the tears of joy with which we welcome a loved and long absent friend, that increases the regret experienced.

Our worthy pastor, robed in his canonicals, and book in hand, met us at the entrance of the church. His face was pale, and his grey locks, moved by the breeze, added to the venerableness of his aspect.

The coffin was borne into the church by four of the most respected cottagers, and was followed by ten or twelve little girls, strewing the early flowers of spring on it, and singing a hymn taught them by the lovely and amiable girl, for whose death their tearful eyes and tremulous voices revealed their deep regret. These children had been the pupils of the two fair sisters, who devoted a certain portion of every day to their instruction, and were regarded by their scholars as little short of Angelic Beings.

My bride, alas! now a mourning one, was with her mother bitterly weeping in the church, having, contrary to the entreaties of the pastor, come to pay the last tribute of respect to her la-

mented sister. As I looked at her, my heart melted with tenderness; but that sacred fane, and the solemn duty that called us there, was no place for fond greetings. I glanced, too, into the open vault, where, from the slanting sunbeams descending from a large window near it, I could perceive the coffin of my dear mother, deposited there six months before. I shuddered at the thought that I was about to intrude into that sanctuary of my loved dead, the body of an utter stranger, whose life and conduct might have been such as to have rendered this contact utterly disrespectful to my departed relatives; but it was now too late to reflect on this painful, but inevitable result of the deception I had foolishly, madly practised, a deception that had plunged my mother-in-law and wife into a renewal of the deep grief to which I was now an agonized witness, and which had destroyed the happiness of my bridal days. How did those pale faces, and streaming eyes, reproach me for that which was known only to my own guilty heart! *Twice* I had caused her, dearest to me on earth, to feel the bitterness of losing her much loved sister, whereas, had I not concealed the remains of that admirable creature, she would only have been exposed to the *one* heavy affliction, which, by this time, would have been softened into a pious resignation, a tender memory, that would not have banished happiness from the commencement of my wedded life.

Such were the reflections that passed through my mind until the words of the Sacred Service for the dead raised my thoughts to another world.

"Lord, thou hast been our refuge from one generation to another.

"Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever the earth and the world were made: Thou art God from everlasting, and world without end. Thou turnest man to destruction: again thou sayest, come again, ye children of men. For a thousand

years in thy sight are but as yesterday: seeing that is past as a watch in the night.

"As soon as thou scattered them, they are even as a sleep: and fade away suddenly like the grass. In the morning it is green, and groweth up: but in the evening it is cut down, dried up, and withered."

Ah, who, while listening to these solemn truths, and beholding a fellow-creature on the point of being committed to the dark cold grave, can dare to think of earthly happiness: the whole mind becomes filled by reflections on the brevity, and the awful uncertainty of life. To love with an all-engrossing passion, such as is felt while yet youth sends the blood rushing quickly through the veins, in its impetuous course banishing prudence, reason, every thing but the object beloved, seems little less than madness at such moments. All the illusions of existence appear destroyed, and the yawning grave towards which, every day, nay, every hour, brings us nearer, seems the only reality.

The sad ceremony over, I approached the two mourners, scarcely less depressed in spirits than themselves. I attempted not to offer any of the vain common-place phrases meant to console, for I knew their inutility. I merely pressed the cold and trembling hands held out to meet mine, and supporting the tottering steps of both, moved slowly from the church.

Who could have believed that it was only the morning of the previous day that I had left that sacred temple, elate with a joy so entire, so engrossing, as to banish the memory of the one terrible event that had given a colour to my life ever since its occurrence? Yet, so it was, and now I felt as if I should never more experience such emotions. Alas! we are all the creatures of circumstance, and with our vain and boasted dependence on self, can no more resist the unseen chain that yokes us to our destiny, than can the sand on the sea shore remain stationary when the advancing and receding wave impels it along.

My poor Louisa was "so pale, so woe-begone," that one might have fancied that long sickness, as well as sorrow, and ten additional years had been added to her age, and it was plainly to be seen that this last shock had so impaired the health of her mother, as to leave little hope of her long surviving it.

What a prospect for a youthful bridegroom, knowing too, as I did, how fond, how devoted was the affection entertained by my wife for her mother, the last surviving relative she had on earth. When we reached our home, my mother-in-law, anxious to learn every particular relative to her lost child, retired to her chamber, to converse with the faithful nurse, and I was left alone with my bride. She arose, and bursting into a passionate fit of weeping, threw herself into my arms, and hid her streaming face on my breast. I kissed her beautiful tresses, and pressed her to my heart, as a fond mother might a weeping child. My very soul was filled with pity for her, and I should have despised and hated myself could I for one moment have ceased to respect her grief. The delicacy of my conduct moved her, and relieved by my tender sympathy, she poured out her sorrow as confidently as an infant whispers its first grievance to a doting nurse.

"Can you forgive me, dearest?" murmured she, "for bringing sorrow and trouble to our home, where I had hoped to have brought only love and peace. Alas! what a terrible task has been imposed on you, and on our wedding-day too! I would fain question you whether my beloved sister retained, in death, any traces of that beauty for which she was so remarkable when in life, but I want courage yet to hear the fearful details. Oh! never shall I forget the part you have taken in our affliction. You who never saw her, who knew not what a pure and admirable creature she was."

How little did my poor Louisa know how well every feature of the dead was engraved on my memory; nay, more — how

vividly her own lovely face recalled that of her lost sister to my mind.

"I could have wished, dearest," said she, "that you had brought me a ringlet of that dear hair which I so often plaited; but I suppose it was changed — spoiled," and she shuddered.

"I *have* brought one," replied I, "and if you desire it, I will at once bring it to you from my chamber, where I left it on entering."

I withdrew; and having taken the ringlet, now six months in my possession, from the box in which I had placed it on returning from the funeral; first having wetted, and then placed it in a napkin to dry, I returned with it to my poor Louisa. She pressed it repeatedly to her lips, bathed it with her tears, and thanked me repeatedly for having brought her this treasure.

"How little changed!" exclaimed she, contemplating its length and silken texture. "Ah! who could imagine that it had lain so many months in the water?"

While she was yet speaking, the nurse came to request my presence in my mother-in-law's chamber.

"I have told her, Sir, of your having the lock of hair, and she desires so much to see it," said the good woman.

I took the ringlet, and placed it in the bereaved mother's hands, who implored blessings on my head for the good feeling I had shown through the whole of the painful business.

"Nurse has told me of all your kindness and thoughtfulness," said she. "Like your excellent mother, you can feel for, and lighten the affliction of others by your sympathy. May my daughter repay you tenfold for all the pain you have experienced the last two days on our account."

It was piteous to see the doting mother contemplating this last relic of her departed child, her eyes dropping tears on it as she gazed. I did not attempt to check them, for I knew they would

relieve her oppressed heart; but, by gentle means I induced both mother and daughter to take some jelly, and a little wine and water: and when night came I led my poor Louisa to her chamber, at the door of which I pressed my lips on her brow, and praying to God that sleep might restore her weakened frame, I took possession of a bed in my dressing-room, every feeling but that of pitying tenderness subdued in my breast.

The heartless voluptuary, who thinks only of his own enjoyment, regardless of the feelings of others, can never know the self-satisfaction I experienced when, the following morning, I saw the cheek of my bride assume a less pallid tint, was assured that she had slept several hours during the night — and above all, perceived that the delicacy and tenderness I had evinced towards her sorrow were so truly appreciated, that her love for me, revealed by an artless and increased confidence, amply repaid me for the triumph achieved over every selfish feeling.

For days and weeks the gloom and sorrow impending over my home was uncheered, save by the tender, but pensive whispered words of affection exchanged between my bride and myself. Both felt that any evident demonstrations of the consolation we found in our mutual love, might appear unfeeling to the bereaved mother, on whose grief time seemed to produce little amelioration. Oh! what a deep well of tenderness lies buried in woman's heart! and how do its waters fall on the arid nature of man, refreshing and revigorating it! My whole being was changed beneath the sweet influence of my beautiful Louisa, at whose feet I was often tempted to prostrate myself, in gratitude for the possession of such a treasure. The long pent in springs of affection now gushed forth from my heart, as the water did from the rock when touched by the wand of Moses; and my lovely — my loving wife, was the enchantress that wrought this miracle. By a glance, a single word, or a pressure of my hand, she could transport me to a state of bliss almost too great for

words; and often did I steal from her presence, when her mother was with her, to conceal an exuberance of happiness that might have reminded her too forcibly of her own unmitigated sorrow. But my happiness was not without alloy. When was that of mortal ever free from it? And *I*, whose folly, whose madness, had wrought such misery to those dear to me — how could I expect that so rare, so blessed a visitant, could make a long sojourn with me?

And yet some foolish expectation that my marriage with her I adored would efface every care, every thought but of herself, from my mind, had beguiled me, and I was now to learn that though moments — nay, hours, of as pure happiness as ever man tasted, were accorded me, a spectre invoked by conscience, and seen only by me, would cross my path, would flit through my chamber, and sometimes haunt my couch, even when the beautiful and guileless head of my wife was resting on my heart, as she slumbered peacefully as an infant. It was true her sweet voice, her expressions of tenderness, and her gentle smile, could exorcise for a time the spectre that haunted my memory; but alas! it would soon return, and silent, and abstracted, I would sink into a gloomy reverie, from which I would start like one awakened from a painful dream, when my Louisa laid her hand on my brow, and questioned me with fond anxiety on the cause of my moodiness.

CHAPTER XVII.

How trifling are the incidents that can awaken a chain of thoughts which for days — ay, and for nights, too, will pursue one! Sitting one day by my Louisa in the chamber of my mother-in-law, and reading aloud to them, as was my wont, a sudden and piercing shriek from the former caused me to let fall the book, when I beheld my wife, pale as death, her eyes widely opened, and terror imprinted on every lineament, rushing wildly away. Her dead sister seemed again before me, just as she looked when starting from slumber, she cast one glance of affright at me, and flet to meet the terrible death that in the next moment destroyed her. I arose, and cried out, "Stay! oh! in pity stay!" and rushed after her. I caught her in my arms, pressed her wildly to my heart, and she faintly laughed; but casting one look at me — the paleness of my face, and the terror imprinted on my countenance, soon checked the smile, and she exclaimed, "Good heavens! my beloved, what is — what can, be the matter with you?"

I put my hand to my brow, and tried to speak, but such was my agitation, that for some time the power of articulating was denied me, and, loosening my grasp from Louisa, I sank trembling into a chair. My mother-in-law looked astonished, and my wife was perfectly aghast. By degrees I recovered my self-possession; and becoming conscious of the necessity of an explanation, I said, "Your cry, Louisa, what caused it. I fancied you had been seized with some spasmodic attack, and —"

"You, dear, dear love, in your alarm for me," observed my wife, "showed yourself almost as great a coward as your foolish

Louisa." And she pressed her lips on my brow, on which cold drops, wrung from it by terror, were standing. "How foolish of me to have thus alarmed you, dearest," resumed she, "but among other numerous follies, I have such a dread of mice, that the sight of one terrifies me to such a degree, that I lose all self-control. I saw a mouse run across the room; poor little animal, I dare say it was much more frightened than I was, and I screamed and ran away."

"Endeavour to conquer this nervousness, my dear," said my mother-in-law, herself deathly pale. "Your cry and your face were so precisely like hers," and here she burst into hysterical tears, "that I could have believed *she* stood before me; and it has shaken my nerves terribly."

"Forgive me, dearest mother, and you, too, my beloved, for thus distressing you," answered Louisa, kisssing her mother's cheek, and then mine; "I am so grieved to have agitated you both."

"My lost child had the same terror of mice," observed Mrs. Maitland, addressing me; "and her shriek, whenever she saw one of these poor little things, seemed to ring in my ear again when Louisa cried out. It may be only imagination; but ever since I lost my first-born, Louisa seems to grow so like her, that although the resemblance between them was always striking, it now appears more so than ever to me."

"Would to heaven, dearest mother, that this increased resemblance could give you any comfort," replied my sweet wife; "but, alas! I fear it only pains you."

It was no wonder, then, that *I* was daily, hourly struck by this strong likeness — a likeness that was ever recalling to my memory an event that I would give worlds to forget, when the bereaved mother acknowledged its effect on hers!

For several days that shriek rang in my ears, haunted my dreams; and I have started from slumber in terror with the wild

imagination that the dead Frances and the living Louisa were one and the same person, and about to be dashed down the steep precipice where the former met her death. Often did I awaken my sleeping wife by my startings and exclamations of terror, and she would question and endeavour to soothe me, accusing herself of having occasioned this nervousness by her childish alarm about the mouse, and thanking and blessing me for these proofs of my tenderness.

Little did she know what was passing in my breast, or how, fondly as I loved her, I shrank from her thanks for demonstrations of terror originating in a cause that I would rather die than reveal to her. I had looked on her sister but once, while she slumbered, calm and beautiful as a sleeping cherub, and during the brief moment that she started from the seat on which she had reclined, and staring wildly at me, rushed away. It was, therefore, only while my wife slept, or when anything alarmed her, that the resemblance to the departed struck me so forcibly, and I dreaded to look on her at these times. But now a fresh incident, by enabling me to identify the likeness more strongly, increased my nervousness and misery, rendering me at certain moments almost a maniac. I had gone out to ride, urged by my wife, who thought that my illness, as she persisted in calling my fits of abstraction and startings at night, was occasioned by too much confinement within doors. I could not bear to leave her, and she, now almost constantly occupied in nursing her mother, whose ill health caused us both the greatest anxiety, could seldom accompany me. Having been absent a couple of hours, I returned, and entered my mother-in-law's chamber, when the first object that met my view was a portrait of *her* whose mortal remains were now mouldering in the grave to which I had consigned them. Taken by surprise, I uttered a cry, and raised my hands to my eyes to shut out the sight that had so violently agitated me, when drawn from the adjoining room to which they had retired to con-

ceal their tears from me, as they had heard me enter the hall, both my wife and her mother hastened into the apartment.

"You are ill, dearest!" exclaimed Louisa; "I see you are, for you are pale as death. Where do you suffer?"

"Yes," observed her mother, "you are suffering severely, I see. My dear son, where is your pain?"

"A sudden spasm at the heart," replied I, "to which I have long been subject. — I am better now."

"Give him a little camphor julep, my dear," said Mrs. Maitland; "there is nothing so good for spasms."

I swallowed the camphor julep handed me by my alarmed wife, and to satisfy her, promised to have a bottle of it always within reach, in case of a return of the complaint; and having recovered my self-control, I talked of my ride, carefully avoiding again to turn my eyes towards the side of the room where the picture was suspended.

"We have had a great surprise during your absence," observed my mother-in-law, "and although it has agitated and made us weep, it will, nevertheless, be, when we get more used to behold it, a consolation. You have not noticed the portrait," and she pointed to it. My eyes followed the direction, and it required a strong effort on my part to look on it without betraying the emotion it produced.

"Just a week before the illness of your dear mother," resumed Mrs. Maitland, "a travelling artist, passing through our neighbourhood, attracted by its picturesque scenery, took up his abode in the little ale-house in the next hamlet. Struck by the appearance of my daughters, he offered to paint their portraits, and your dear mother, wishing to possess them, my lost Frances gave him two or three sittings, when the indisposition of my dear friend put an end to her giving any further ones, all our time and thoughts being filled up in attending by the sick-bed of our dear friend, and the artist went away, taking with him the unfinished

sketch. When the terrible stroke which deprived us of my blessed child fell on us, I wished of all things to get the sketch, but we knew not the address of the painter. He, it appears by his letter, only returned from a long tour in the provinces a short time ago, and having finished the portrait, sent it down to me. It is a most striking resemblance, and when, during your ride, it arrived, I had it placed where it is now suspended, in order to have it constantly before me. Might it not, my dear son, pass for the portrait of our dear Louisa?"

I assented to the truth of the remark, as well I might, for never was there a more perfect resemblance.

And now for several hours in the day was that portrait placed before me. It seemed to possess the power attributed to the basilisk, for I could not turn my eyes from it, though the sight kept constantly alive in my breast the memory of an event that poisoned my existence, and which I would have given worlds to bury in oblivion. There were those dark and thoughtful eyes, that seemed to look into my very soul, for ever bent on me; and when I turned away to shun them, the dark and lustrous eyes of my wife met mine with an expression of such pensiveness and tenderness, that I have often been compelled to leave the chamber to conceal my emotion.

Every day increased our anxiety for the health of my mother-in-law, and confirmed my fears that she would not be long left to us. The consciousness that the loss of her daughter had dealt the death-blow to her life, was a fearful addition to the misery that poisoned mine; and as I saw the anxiety and wretchedness that took possession of my sweet and gentle Louisa, as she beheld her fondly loved mother, her last relative, fading away, I felt that *I*, on whom she showered the rich blessing of her affection, was the accursed cause of all her grief. I, I it was who had robbed her of a sister on whom she doted, and who was

now by slow, but sure degrees, sending her mother to the grave.

The physicians called in to Mrs. Maitland held out no hope of her recovery. They pronounced her disease to be the result of anxiety and grief, and informed me that a few months must end her existence. Anxious to atone for my involuntary sin against her peace, and desirous to prove my tenderness for my wife, I devoted every hour to attendance on her dying mother. I read to her, I sate by her couch, endeavouring to beguile the long and weary hours of her confinement by every means that could suggest themselves to my anxious mind; and when she thanked and blessed me, and that my adored Louisa, with her eyes filled with tears of gratitude, would tell me that never son had more thoughtfully or tenderly fulfilled his duties to a mother, I have truly whispered, that never could I do enough to prove my devotion to both her mother and herself.

And now hope was held out to me that I should, in a few months, be a father, but the joy this intelligence afforded was damped by the delicacy of my wife's health, and the precarious state of her mother. The unceasing attention required by Mrs. Maitland's increased weakness, added to her own situation, had been too much for my poor Louisa, whose pallid face and languor greatly alarmed me. I endeavoured, and I believe with success, to minister to the comfort of both invalids; but, alas! the fiat had gone forth, and it became evident that a few days must terminate the existence of my excellent mother-in-law.

I had tried to prepare my dear Louisa for the sad event; and her dying mother, with a resignation and fortitude that proved her trust in the Almighty, exhorted her to bear, as a Christian should, this new trial. It was touching to behold and listen to these two admirable women as they spoke of that better, brighter world, to which one was hastening, and where the other hoped,

when called hence, to join her: and when the hour of parting came, Mrs. Maitland sank on her pillow as a tired traveller sinks to rest, with her dying breath blessing her daughter and me, to whom, from the first hour of our meeting to the last of her life, she had evinced all the affection of a mother.

I will not dwell on the details of this sad event. In three weeks after the grave closed over Mrs. Maitland my beloved wife gave birth to a daughter, and this new claimant on her love, and the duties it imposed, I do believe saved her from the consequences of a grief that might have destroyed her delicate frame. You, my precious child, were welcomed with speechless but overflowing tenderness, and were baptized in tears, for those caused by a parent's loss often bathed your dear face, as your mother covered it with kisses. She expressed so strong a desire to nurse you, that although fearful that her strength was unequal to the task, I yielded an assent, but not until the doctor had assured me that this maternal occupation would prove the best remedy for her grief, nay, prevent her indulging it, from the knowledge that it would inevitably prove injurious to the health of her infant.

And when I beheld my sweet Louisa gradually recover her tranquillity as she watched, Madonna-like, over her child, on whose existence her own seemed to hang, I rejoiced that I had consented to her wishes, and felt my little daughter grow, if possible, dearer to me as I witnessed the consolation, the blessing, she proved to her dear mother. Far was I from imagining that the circumstance of her nursing her infant might eventually lead to exciting alarm, if not suspicion, in the mind of my wife; but, alas! so it was. Instead of allowing the little one to sleep with the attendant hired to wait on her, and who was, as the doctor recommended, to bring it to its mother once or twice during the night to receive its nurture, my wife would not consent to be separated from her nursling at night, and had a

little cot placed by our bed-side, from which she could remove the baby at will. Her anxiety to supply it with its nurture kept her wakeful, previously an unusual thing with her, who was a very sound sleeper, and consequently my broken slumbers, my wild startings, and my incoherent ravings, which had become habitual to me ever since the terrible night that had deprived her of a sister, now first became known to her. Alarmed for my health, often did she awake, and, with pitying tenderness, question me. But I pleaded some disagreeable dream, or nightmare, to which I said I had been from childhood subject, and she, though evidently uneasy, urged me no more; but when the doctor paid his next visit to see her and her infant, she consulted him whether a remedy might not be found to prevent these uneasy slumbers. I happened to be in an adjoining room, whence I could hear all that passed.

"My dear husband," said she, "starts violently, utters half incoherent exclamations of falling down precipices, trembles, and, in short, when I awake him, appears in great agitation."

"I see, I see," said the doctor, a worthy man, but not a skilful physician, and whose prevailing weakness was to endeavour to conceal his professional ignorance by the use, or rather abuse, of technical terms, with the real signification of which he was not always acquainted. "I am disposed to think that Mr. Herbert's disease originates in a chronic derangement of the coronary, or gastro-epiploic artery, probably caused by a pressure of the stomachic, or hepatic plexus, acting on the cauda equina of the medulla spinalis, communicating with the pelvis viscera, and influencing the action of the pathetici nerves on the brain, the pia or dura mater of which being affected, sometimes leads to mischief."

Although annoyed that my infirmity should be exposed to Doctor Bellinden, I could not resist smiling as I listened to this

incongruous medley of technical phrases, all so wholly misapplied as to prove his ignorance to any one at all acquainted with the terms.

"Good heavens! doctor, you alarm me beyond measure," observed my wife, her voice tremulous with emotion.

"You must not, my dear Madam, suffer yourself to be alarmed. With my professional experience, I flatter myself I shall soon succeed in removing the unpleasant symptoms you have named, and restore Mr. Herbert to his wonted health."

"Fool, fool," thought I. "Thou canst not

> '— minister to a mind diseased;
> Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow:
> Raze out the written troubles of the brain;
> And with some sweet oblivious antidote
> Cleanse the stuffed bosom of that perilous stuff
> Which weighs upon the heart?'"

CHAPTER XVIII.

From the moment I became aware that I spoke in my sleep, and that the wakefulness of my wife enabled her to observe my nocturnal uneasiness, and to overhear my words, I was seized with a terror lest my terrible secret should be revealed to her, which, acting on my already deranged nerves, increased the danger I apprehended. Never did I sink into slumber without fear and trembling, lest I should utter something to betray myself. I have lain hour after hour in enforced wakefulness, watching, to be assured that she slept, before I dared resign myself to slumber, till, worn out by fatigue, my eye-lids have closed, and even in the short and fevered slumbers which followed these long hours of watchfulness, the dread of exposing my secret haunted me. I took the prescriptions of the doctor, but alas! as I had anticipated, derived no advantage from them. Mine was a malady of the mind acting on the body; and not a disease of the body operating on the mind, and I was well aware, that to attempt to ameliorate the effect without removing the cause, was a hopeless task. But as I dared not express this conviction, I yielded to the reiterated requests of my wife, and took the potions recommended.

On the death of her mother, my wife had the portrait of her sister removed to our general sitting-room, and there it was during the day, and long evenings, confronting me with its pensive eyes, and, as if endowed with some magical power, drawing mine continually towards them. I had asked my wife not to have the portrait placed in that room; but she pleaded so strongly that it might remain, that fearful of exciting suspicions that it

was disagreeable to *me*, for latterly, every thing, however trifling, alarmed me on this point, I let it be hung where she wished it; and thus, that image, which I would have given all I possessed to banish from my mind, was continually kept alive in it, by circumstances over which I could not exert a control, without betraying, or fancying that I betrayed, that I was actuated by some hidden motive.

I could now well comprehend how murderers, after having long escaped detection, have been so haunted by the recollection of their crimes, and having suffered such agonies by the dread of discovery, have, unable any longer to bear their misery, confessed the fact, and given themselves up to justice. Oh! could I have found some friend to whom I could confide my terrible secret perhaps I should have found relief. Perhaps a cool and impartial mind might have taught me to distinguish the difference between an accidental act of folly, followed by a dreadful catastrophe, the possibility of which could never have presented itself to my imagination, and one of premeditated guilt, for which I felt myself responsible. But with me the powers of discrimination and sober judgment were so impaired by constantly brooding over this one heart-rending event, entailing others so harrowing to my feelings, that I could no longer draw the line of distinction; and who dared I trust with the secret, that, like a canker, was preying on my life; nay, notwithstanding the blessings I still possessed, in a wife and child I adored, was rendering existence an almost insupportable burthen.

I had believed, previously to my marriage, that once wedded to my Louisa, her presence and her affection would banish the one dark shadow that obscured the sunshine of my life. But I had been disappointed. She was more faultless, more attractive than my fondest hopes had ever painted her; she loved me as only the most worthy deserve to be loved, and had given me a child on whom I doted — and yet the one fatal event was still

ever present to my mind — it haunted me by day — took possession of my pillow by night — nay, even in her arms, those pure and lovely arms, that had never clasped mortal, save her mother and mine, her sister and our child, I was pursued by the recollection of the dead, hurled into eternity by my madness.

The doctor prescribed air and my Louisa, to engage me to adopt his advice, would walk with me, endeavouring, by a thousand nameless loving wiles, known only to the gentler sex, and practised only by the most amiable and tenderest of it, to cheer my spirits and chase away the moodiness, that had, by degrees, taken possession of me. A faint smile, or a tender pressure, repaid her exertions, but notwithstanding all her efforts, and my own, I soon relapsed again into abstraction. By a fatality, my wife always directed her steps to the scene, which, of all others, I wished most to avoid. She would pause to rest herself on the seat in the alcove, become as painful as it was memorable to me; and though I endeavoured to induce her to avoid it, I never succeeded. Indeed, the only other picturesque walk in our neighbourhood led to the church-yard, the sight of which never failed to renew my Louisa's sadness, and to awaken my own: so, the well-known path that led to the home of her youth, so often traversed with the dear and departed, became our frequent promenade in fine weather. But the frequency of my visits to it, could not vanquish the repugnance, nay, more, the horror I felt at approaching it. I have seen my wife, when she thought herself unobserved, examining me with a mixture of anxiety and fear in her countenance, whenever I betrayed any of the symptoms of repugnance to certain places and things, which, in spite of all my efforts to conceal, I did not always succeed in doing. This discovery alarmed and distressed me. A thousand vague, but tormenting fears began to haunt me, and my constraints and uneasiness in her presence became consequently increased. Sometimes I fancied that possibly I had, when talking in my

sleep, divulged enough of my terrible secret, to excite her suspicions, and that she purposely led me to the alcove, in order to try how far I could support the sight of it.

But it were bootless to recapitulate all the wild and wayward fancies that took possession of my excited brain, suffice it to say, that there were moments when I suspected my own reason, so wholly had one thought engrossed all my mind, becoming nothing short of monomania. And yet, while doubting my own sanity, it never once occurred to me, that a similar doubt might have arisen in the mind of my wife.

My health began to give way beneath the continual anxiety under which my mind laboured. Sleep fled my couch, and I regretted it not, because its absence assured me an immunity from revealing my secret to my wife, and it was only after she arose in the morning, that, after requesting that no one might enter my chamber, I resigned myself to slumber free from alarm. My appetite was gone, — my body became emaciated, and my spirits were so depressed, that I would sit for whole hours speechless, absorbed in a deep reverie, from which I would start in alarm, if suddenly addressed. The tenderness of Louisa often brought tears to my eyes; but alas! brought no happiness to my heart. Fondly, truly as I loved her, I began to regard her as a spy whom I dreaded; and though I felt it would be torture to tear myself away from her, I was more than half disposed to do so, for the sake of being released from the constraint her presence imposed. She would place our child in my arms, and teach the little creature to clap hands at my approach, and to present its dear red lips for a kiss from mine, and for a few brief minutes I would forget my misery, and feel happy. But then she would remark the striking resemblance the child bore to her departed sister, and ask me to look on the portrait I dreaded to behold, in order to judge of it, and, then I would return the little girl to her arms, leave the room

suddenly, and rush into the open air, almost like a maniac, until recalled to a sense of the suspicions to which such conduct was likely to give rise, when compelling myself to assume a tranquil air, I would return to the house, seek my wife and converse on some indifferent topic. I now began to dread the presence of my child, because its dear mother continually reverted to the likeness it bore to her sister.

"No consolation, no pleasure, remains free to me," would I say, "without being destroyed by some reference to the one terrible subject, that once touched upon, produces such agony in my soul. Better," thought I, "stand alone in the world, deprived of wife and child, than be thus tortured. Fain would I visit some far distant region, where the sound of that name I wished for ever buried in oblivion, could never be heard. Oh! how far preferable would it be than to live in perpetual terror of betraying a secret which was kept for ever alive in my memory by the frequent recurrence to the one fatal subject connected with it. But how summon resolution sufficient to fly from my Louisa — from our child? Would not she, my better half, my guardian angel, whose unchanging love was my sole blessing, pine, perhaps die, if I deserted her and our infant? Oh no! I could not leave her. Life would be insupportable without her, — and at the bare idea of inflicting sorrow on her, my own suffering seemed as nought in the balance."

I had one day been out a considerable time, when, entering suddenly, I found the doctor with my wife. I had lately noticed that his visits were much more frequent than formerly, which had somewhat alarmed me, from the suspicion that they were in some way connected with me. Was it possible that my wife had revealed to him the observations she might have made on the incoherence of my manner and conduct, when consulting him about my broken health? Both appeared confused and annoyed by my sudden entrance. Unpractised in deception, my

poor Louisa could not conceal her embarrassment; and though the doctor affected to continue the conversation, it became evident to me he had chosen a fresh topic.

"By-the-by, Mr. Herbert," said he, after one of those awkward pauses in our discourse which denoted that none of the persons engaged in it were at their ease, "I don't think you are looking better. I suspect that our mountain air, though in general considered so healthy, is too keen for you, and that not only your health, but that also Mrs. Herbert, would be greatly benefited by a change. Suppose you travel. Move about from place to place for some time. Be assured you will derive great advantage from such a step, and I shall have the pleasure of seeing you return with renovated health."

"I should like it exceedingly," observed my wife, "for I think it would do us all good. What say you, dearest?"

"If *you* wish for change," replied I, coldly, "I can have no objection; but I thought that you liked retirement, and preferred our home to all other places."

There was something reproachful in these words, as well as in the tone in which they were uttered, and Louisa's sensitive mind felt it, for she blushed deeply, and then turned very pale.

"It is very true *I do* like retirement, and prefer home to all other places," observed she, mildly; "but when health requires a change, I am ready to adopt the doctor's advice."

"I was not aware that you were in delicate health," said I. "Why did you not sooner inform me on a point in which I take so deep an interest?"

"Delicate health is perhaps too strong a term," replied Louisa, blushing deeply; "but occasionally I feel a little unwell. I have had great trials you know, in the loss of those so dear to me," and tears started to her eyes.

"Always a reproach," thought I, and this unjust thought made my manner harsh, if not unfeeling.

"No one is exempt from such trials," observed I, "and those who love, or consult the happiness of the *living*, do not devote themselves wholly to a morbid grief for the dead."

No sooner had I uttered this unjust remark, than I felt sorry for it, but the presence of Doctor Bellinden prevented me from expressing my regret. Louisa turned very pale, but made no reply, and the doctor observing the change in her countenance, said, "that although Mrs. Herbert made light of her occasional illness, it was his positive opinion, that unless change of air was immediately resorted to, her health would inevitably become seriously endangered. Seek the milder climate of Devonshire," added he. "It will be advantageous to you both, as well as to the child, and let this advice be followed with as little delay as possible."

How strange, how inexplicable is the human heart! How often had I wished to leave home! How frequently had I desired an excuse for taking such a step, in the hope that in quitting it, I should leave behind the chagrin kept constantly alive by the scenes that recalled it. I had fancied, that away from them, new thoughts, new feelings, would start into life, and bring back a healthy tone to my distracted mind; but now that the proposal for going was made by another, that I was furnished with so reasonable an excuse for departing, the wish of going suddenly subsided, from the suspicion that a secret understanding on the subject of my strange melancholy, existed between my wife and doctor Bellinden, and that this was the real cause of his counsel, and not the health of my wife. This surmise, offended, wounded, me. Was it indeed come to this? Could the wife of my bosom!, the idol of my heart, betray to any human being the suspected mental infirmity of her husband? Yet, that she had done so, seemed evident. Why were his visits so frequent? Why did they both appear so confused when I unexpectedly entered? Yes, it was clear she had revealed her

suspicions of my sanity to the doctor, who, to humour my waywardness, and furnish an excuse for advising change of air and scene, had invented the fable of my wife's health requiring it. Deeply wounded, and offended by this imagined breach of faith on her part, I sat brooding over it in silence, leaving the doctor to judge me cold and unfeeling towards her, when, with all my waywardness and folly, I loved, nay, doted on her, with a passion as true and warm, as ever filled the heart of man. — I felt that I would willingly lay down my life to insure the happiness of hers — that there was no sacrifice I would not make to accomplish this, the dearest object of my existence; yet, with this conviction, I allowed her to think me careless and indifferent about her health, and let the doctor depart in the same belief, a belief that must have rendered me in his eyes, the most worthless and ungrateful of men.

CHAPTER XIX.

When, after dinner that day, my moodiness still continuing, notwithstanding the sweet and feminine efforts of Louisa, to draw me from it, she, her fair face assuming a paler hue, and those deep and thoughtful eyes timidly turned to mine, thus addressed me.

"Dearest, as far as I can judge by your manner, it appears that you do not wish to leave our home. If this be the case, pray do not bestow a second thought on the counsel of Dr. Bellinden. My health, though perhaps a little affected by the sad events of the last year and a half, is not sufficiently deranged to render a removal from this place absolutely necessary, so do not adopt any plan not quite agreeable to you on my account."

"Are you sure, Louisa," and I looked full in her face while I spoke, "that it was *your* health that induced Dr. Bellinden to advise our removal from home?"

"I believe my health had a considerable influence in the advice," replied she, her rising colour betraying that she felt conscious of the suspicion I entertained.

"Had you no conversation with him, on *mine?*" asked I, almost sternly.

"Yes, certainly, certainly," replied she; "I spoke to him, for I was alarmed, my dear Marmaduke," and she walked gently up to me and pressed her lips on my fevered brow, "at observing your total want of appetite, your loss of sleep, your lowness of spirits, and wished Dr. Bellinden to prescribe something that might be beneficial to your health."

"Then why not tell me your intention of consulting him?"

demanded I, angrily. "Am I such a child as not to be made acquainted with your thoughts, and plans, and more especially in a case so closely concerning myself?"

"My not having told you, originated in a well-meant, though perhaps a mistaken tenderness," said she, her voice tremulous with emotion. "I thought you might object to my consulting a doctor, as nervous persons frequently do, and —"

"So I am nervous, am I?" interrupted I rudely, "and am to be treated either as a hypocondriac, or a maniac."

"Oh! how you mistake and pain me," replied she, bursting into tears. "I believed that the sad, sad scenes you had witnessed since you came here, the grief you more than witnessed, for your kind heart and affection for me, made you a true sharer in it, had affected your health and spirits. Could I then be indifferent to a state of health induced by your tenderness to me? Ah! no. It has sunk into my heart, and increased tenfold my affection. I have lost all but you, and our child; but *you, you* and it, are all in all to me. Can I then be otherwise than most anxious about your health; and dreading to weary you on a subject always disagreeable to those in delicate health, and more especially to persons who are nervous?"

"Nervous, nervous," reiterated I, impatiently; forgetting, in the irritation produced by that word, the softness into which my feelings were relenting, as I listened to her sweet voice, and simple attempt to exculpate herself from my unjust suspicions. "Nervousness is but another name for a state of mind bordering on insanity, and you cannot suppose that it can be otherwise than most painful and humiliating to me to have a physician led to believe that such is my case?"

My wife looked at me with undissembled alarm, the excitement of my manner; the flushing of my countenance, and the anger I could not conceal, might well have confirmed a suspicion of my sanity, had such ever crossed her mind.

"I am not mad," resumed I, my anger increasing as I witnessed her alarm; "but I may be rendered so, if treated as a maniac. You, the wife of my bosom, the mother of my child, should have concealed the terrible infirmity you suspected, instead of confiding your fears to another."

"You cannot surely be serious in this charge?" said my poor Louisa, looking pale as marble, and fixing her eyes anxiously on my face. "No, no, you cannot think so ill of me?" and she burst into a passion of tears.

The truthfulness of her manner, and the guileless expression of her countenance restored my confidence; and ashamed of my conduct, I pressed her to my heart, and implored her forgiveness for my injustice and harshness. How soon was her pardon accorded me, and how gently, how soothingly did she speak it!

"But," observed she, "this interview proves to me that change of scene is absolutely necessary to us both. Our feelings have grown into a morbidness, that requires our thoughts to be directed from ourselves, — from our grief; and you will best prove your restored confidence in me by yielding to Dr. Bellinden's advice, and putting it into execution as soon as possible."

There was no resisting the wishes of my sweet Louisa, and in two days after we left Llandover. Every milestone that marked our increased distance from home seemed to remove a weight from my spirits; and my wife, marking the change with delight, became more cheerful than I had ever previously seen her. Every turn in the road presenting a fine prospect, called forth expressions of pleasure from her, and like a child recently from school, every novel object gratified her. It is true, in the midst of her enjoyment, a sigh would escape from her breast, and a pensive shade steal over her beautiful face, and she would lay her hand on mine, look up tenderly in my face, and say, Oh, why is it that happiness like mine should have one alloy? Enchanted with the charming scenery we are travelling through, blessed, dearest,

with you and our child, I should be the happiest of mortals if the thought of how those dearly loved ones, now in the grave, would have enjoyed all that now delights me, had they been spared me." And her mild eyes would fill with tears, as she leant her head on my shoulder. And I, instead of wiping away those tears, and pressing her to my heart, would remain silent, and careless of her renewed regret, absorbed by my own selfish annoyance at her having unconsciously awakened a train of painful thought, which I had undertaken this journey to avoid.

"What," said I to myself, "have I complied with her wishes to seek change of scene, to be thus tortured by her continually recurring to that *past*, which I would fain blot out for ever from my memory."

"Is it not strange, dearest," would she say, after a pause, "that either pleasure or grief should bring back so vividly to our minds those dear lost ones, that would have taken so lively an interest in both? Never do I behold a day of sunshine, when nature has put forth all her charms, when the balmy air fans my cheek, the odour of flowers scents the atmosphere, and the carol of birds delights my ear, without remembering that the dear companion of my youth, who once shared all these pleasures with me, who was in truth my second self, partaking all my feelings and tastes, is shut out for ever from this fair earth, and mouldering in the dark and silent grave." And then tears would again fill her eyes.

"The grave is but the portal to the temple of immortality," have I replied; "and the senseless clay mouldering there, is but the garment cast off when the soul deserted it. You should remember that those you mourn are with their God and yours, enjoying a happiness that this world ne'er can give, and that to indulge in useless regret is weak, if not sinful."

To such reasoning, uttered, too, in a tone that resembled reproof, much more than commiseration, my poor Louisa would

make no reply; but I observed that after a few such exhibitions of want of sympathy on my part, she spoke to me no more of her regrets, although her eloquent countenance, every change of which revealed all that was passing in her mind, as pure crystal does that which it contains, proved that her pensive reminiscences, though not uttered, were often awakened, and the knowledge of this kept the recollection of my dread secret continually alive in my breast. I believed that had my wife banished *her* grief, *mine* would have slumbered, and I resented as a wilful injury her awakening it, as if with her deep sensibility, and affectionate nature, she could conquer memory and regret. Sensitive natures are quick to discern every shade of feeling. It may be said of them, that they see with the heart, for frequently do they perceive what might escape the keenest eyes of ordinary persons.

Often have I noticed Louisa's lips open to address me, her countenance beaming with a tender expression, which denoted that her thoughts were of the past, when she would seem to remember something, close them suddenly, sigh deeply, and sink into a reverie. Well did I divine what was passing in her mind, and rapidly did it recall that which I would give worlds to forget. But instead of feeling grateful for her self-control in not uttering what she feared might give me pain, I felt offended at what I considered her want of confidence, and blamed that which my own conduct had occasioned. "What," thought I, "have I gained by her forbearance in not touching on certain subjects, if her countenance reveals, as plainly as words could do, that she is continually thinking of them? and thus keep them ever before me." There are few things, if any, more destructive to conjugal happiness than one prohibited subject of conversation. It invaribly produces a constraint that chills all the pleasure of that confidential *causerie* which forms one of the sources of domestic enjoyment. The consciousness that there is a topic that must be

avoided, keeps that identical one more constantly in the mind than others, and begets reserve and timidity.

I sometimes wondered what notions Louisa had formed of the cause of my annoyance when she had referred to her lost relatives; for that she had discovered that the reference to them inflicted pain on me, I could not doubt, so carefully had she of late avoided touching on them. Had she heard me utter anything in my sleep that betrayed my feelings, or did she consider me so wholly selfish that I could not bear to be reminded of painful regrets? The first surmise alarmed, the second offended me, and then came a third that did both. Did she really think me insane, and dread exciting me by reverting to the sad events of the last year and a-half? Alas! did not these morbid suspicions, this monomania, which kept the mind continually fixed on one point, prove that, if not quite insane, I bordered closely on insanity; and as this reflection passed through my brain, I became overwhelmed with terror.

At one of the inns where we stopped for the night on our journey, Louisa happened to take up a newspaper, and began, thinking it might amuse me, to read portions of it aloud, my eyes were unconsciously fixed on her face, while hers were bent on the paper, when, after reading two or three paragraphs, I saw her shudder and lay down the journal.

"What has affected you, dearest?" inquired I; "and why do you not read on?"

"I dislike perusing painful subjects, and especially at night," replied she, "for they are apt to haunt one in sleep."

"What was the painful subject you met with?" asked I.

"Something very dreadful. A man, for many years esteemed and respected by his neighbours, and beloved by his family, has been arrested for a murder committed many years ago. The body of his victim, which he buried in a deep pit in the neighbourhood of his dwelling, has been discovered; and a sleeve-button, bear-

ing his crest and initials, found in the pit, has led to his being accused of the crime, and arrested."

I felt the blood rush to my head; my brain seemed to burn; my eyes could scarcely discern surrounding objects; and my heart beat so tumultuously, that I fancied its throbbings must be audible to my wife, as I listened to her words. I did not attempt to speak, for I was conscious that such an effort must inevitably betray my deep emotion; but I gasped for breath, and sank back on the sofa on which I had been seated.

"Good heavens! you are ill—very ill!" exclaimed my wife, rushing to my assistance, and loosening my neck-cloth. She held to my lips a glass of water snatched from the table. I drank a few drops of it, but not without great difficulty, for the power of swallowing seemed impaired.

"Where do you suffer? what is it you feel?" demanded my wife, her face expressive of the deepest alarm and anxiety.

"Only an attack of my old complaint, spasms at the heart," replied I, in broken words, "but they have passed away now, and I am nearly well."

"Heaven be praised!" murmured she, pressing me fondly to her heart; "but indeed, my beloved, these sudden attacks are very alarming; and you must—yes, indeed you must, consult some clever physician for a remedy."

She watched every change in my face with a tender anxiety that could not be counterfeited; pressed her cool hand to my burning brow, on which it fell, refreshing it like the breath of evening coming after a sultry day; sent to the apothecary of the little town for a bottle of camphor-julep, and lavished on me all those tender attentions which only women, and intelligent, affectionate ones, can bestow on the object of their love, without being fussy or obtrusive.

Happy, thrice happy, may he consider himself, whatever be his trials, who is blessed with the affection of a pure and gentle

woman; if it forms not a shield to guard him against the assaults of misfortune, it, at least, furnishes a salve to heal the wounds inflicted by it. This salve, this blessing, was mine; but in the ingratitude which ever forms one of the peculiar characteristics of selfishness, and in the engrossment of all my faculties in the one absorbing thought that haunted me, I prized not the blessing lent me by Providence until I had lost it, and live to mourn, with a never-dying repentance, my blindness, my ingratitude. Well and truly has it been said, that the misfortunes brought on us by our own follies are precisely those most difficult to be borne, for self-reproach adds bitterness to them.

CHAPTER XX.

Will it be believed, that even while yet conscious of the tender care lavished on me, while listening to the low, gentle, sweet voice, uttering only words of affectionate anxiety for my health, I could not divest myself of a suspicion that my wife either doubted my sanity, or suspected that some guilty secret was connected with what she termed my nervousness? Yes, that pure, that noble mind, incapable of suspicion, I dared to doubt. Why did she avoid reading aloud the paragraph that had so violently agitated me? She surely must have had some motives for it? And I conjured up various ones, *all* most alarming to me, and unjust to her, to account for so simple a circumstance as her not wishing to read a painful detail, and which she explained with a candour that would have satisfied any one with feelings less morbid, and a mind less suspicious than mine, that she was actuated by no other motive than the natural one assigned. I asked myself whether it could be possible that my sudden illness on her reading the paragraph aloud, could have escaped her notice, or could have failed to awaken suspicion of its being the cause? and conscience whispered it must be so. Truly has it been said, that "a guilty conscience needs no accuser." Mine was ever on the alert to take alarm, and reason strove in vain to subdue the fears conjured up by imagination.

I dreaded to resign myself to slumber that night, lest I should betray what was passing in my mind, and so confirm the suspicions that I believed my wife must entertain, but I could make no excuse for not seeking my pillow when the usual hour of rest arrived, though, heaven knows, I trembled at the bare notion.

Long did I resist the influence of drowsiness, but at length sleep stole on me. I dreamt that my wife held the newspaper in her hand, and was again reading aloud the paragraph that had so much excited me, occasionally withdrawing her eyes from the paper to watch the effect of the statement on me. I felt her eyes fixed on my face, not with their usual mild and tender expression, but with a cold and keen examination, that chilled my blood. From the fond wife, she seemed metamorphosed into the stern accuser, the inexorable judge. Her glance seemed to possess the fatal power of the basilisk, for, turn wherever I might, it still pursued me, till, maddened, I started from slumber, exclaiming "Hide me, hide me from those eyes, they pierce my brain, they destroy me."

"My love, my husband, it is me, your own Louisa," said my wife, clasping me in her arms, as with distended eye-lids, and gasping for breath, I sat up, trembling, and pale as death. "You are ill, very ill, dearest," resumed she, looking anxiously in my face.

"No, only a night-mare," said I, recovering from my terror. "What did I say in my slumber? Were you asleep, or did I awake you?"

"I was awake," replied my wife.

"Ay, always awake," thought I. "She never sleeps, but keeps constant vigil, to overhear my wild ravings, to verify her suspicions. Oh! this is intolerable!"

"You have not told me what I said in my sleep?" demanded I.

"Why think of it, dearest?" replied she.

"But why not tell me?" asked I, eagerly.

"You muttered something about hiding you, and of some one's eyes destroying you, and were starting from bed when I held you back, and awoke you."

I drew a deep breath, and after a brief pause, said "Yes, I

now remember, my dream or nightmare was, of some creature with eyes darting fire into my brain!"

"You must not drink tea or coffee at night, my love," said my wife, "for I am sure both are injurious to your health, and impair your rest."

I slept no more that night, and when I heard the soft breathing of my Louisa, calm and peaceful as that of our slumbering child by her side, I blessed God for this proof that her mind was not disturbed by suspicions which my agitation on awaking and incoherent exclamations were so calculated to excite. And as I lay awake, counting the tedious hours tolled by a neighbouring clock, the recollection of the paragraph in the newspaper again and again presented itself to my mind.

Here was an instance of a body, interred for many years being at last discovered, and the murderer pointed out by a sleeve-button! Perhaps the owner of the button might have been guiltless of the crime. Nevertheless, the evidence of that button must affix the guilt on him, and I shuddered at the possibility that when I consigned the remains of my wife's sister to her unhallowed grave, some proof of my having done so might have been interred with them. I tried to remember whether I had missed any thing from my person — whether there was a chance of dropping any article, however small, that could serve to identify me; but although, after a long scrutiny, I could remember that previous to going to the cavern I had removed from my person the few ornaments I wore, I could not conquer the dread, that, unknown to me, some evidence might yet exist that *I* had buried the dead. Then, had not the remains found in the deep pit where they had lain so many years been *at last* discovered? Had not he who laid them there, like me, calculated that they would never be detected? Why, then, should I count so securely on the eternal concealment of the remains interred in the cavern? Might not some idle boys, less timid than the generality, find out the spot?

Might not robbers, in seeking a place of concealment for their plunder, discover it? And some difference of the colour in the sand, leading to suspicion of hidden booty, tempt them to dig the spot, and find the mouldering remains.

I now recollected, with alarm, that I had never seen the cavern by day-light, so that, a difference in the colour of the earth where it had been dug, *might* betray cause for suspicion, and lead to discovery. All this, though not probable, was yet within the bounds of possibility, and I shuddered while I acknowledged it to myself. Why had I not again visited the cavern by day-light, before I left home, and ascertained what now filled me with such alarm? This would have been but a wise precaution, but no, fool, madman that I was, I blindly counted on safety, when a future day might prove how falsely I had reckoned.

Then would reason, for a brief period, assert its power, and whisper that even should the remains be found during my life, what evidence could point me out as being at all connected with their interment. Nay, could it not be made apparent by the testimony of several persons, that I had never seen the only individual missing from the time of my arrival in the country, that person being my sister-in-law, whose body was found in the river, and afterwards interred? But ingenious in self-torturing, then came the thought, that if the remains should happen to be found before the dress was wholly destroyed, would it not immediately be recognized by the nurse and other servants so well acquainted with the dead? Yes, it certainly would, and I, thoughtless, and madly confiding in the notion that the spot would never be found out, had not made away with them! Indeed, a thought of doing so never once entered my head; and if it had, I would have shrank from the task; for, to profane the person of that fair creature by disrobing her, would *then* have appeared nothing short of sacrilege in my eyes, while now, with the terror of the chance of discovery, banishing every other thought but that of self-preserva-

tion, I believed I could have had nerves to fulfil the fearful task, rather than suffer the dread that now had taken possession of me, awakened by the paragraph in the newspaper.

I writhed in inexpressible torture as these thoughts passed through my mind. And there, tranquilly sleeping, lay my wife, little dreaming that the person dearest to her in life, save our child, was enduring a mental agony that she would not have wished the most guilty to suffer — an agony that must never be revealed—and for which even her tenderness had no balm. There were moments, when my feelings, excited to madness, I have gazed on her face as she slumbered, until its extraordinary resemblance to that of her departed sister almost led me to the belief that I now gazed on *her*. So did the face of the still lovely dead look, when, as the bright moon shone on it, I contemplated, in an agony of grief and remorse, its wondrous beauty. Never could I now behold my wife, without being struck by the strong resemblance which, keeping ever alive the memory of the one fatal event, which embittered a life that might, without it, have been blest as was ever that of mortal. My child, too, was strikingly like her mother, and, consequently, greatly resembled her aunt; and frequently would my wife remark on this likeness, and press her little girl to her breast fondly, as if the resemblance to her lost sister rendered the child more dear to her: while, heaven knows, it proved a fresh source of pain to me.

My moodiness and waywardness, though they failed to obliterate my wife's tenderness for me, nay, more, I believe, even increased it, by the pity it engendered in her gentle heart, seemed to cast a spell over us, that made itself felt by a reserve and constraint on her part, which, though originating in her affection, which caused a fear of uttering anything that could excite my gloom or sadness, nevertheless, added to both, by reminding me of her consciousness that this self-control and forbearance towards me, were necessary. To appear in the eyes of an idolized

wife, as a poor, weak, nervous valetudinarian, against whose infirmities of mind she must ever be on her guard, lest she excited them into greater activity, was most humiliating; and there were moments, when, far from appreciating this angelic goodness of hers, I was ready to call in question its motives, and to resent its result. If, as was frequently the case, I caught her eyes fixed anxiously on my face, instead of meeting her glance with one of answering tenderness, I have either shrank away from it in confusion, like a criminal who cannot meet the gaze of his judge, or a hypocondriac who is offended by the examination of his physician. If she continued to look at me after I had detected her glance, I felt suspicious and hurt; if, on the contrary, she turned away her eyes, I mentally accused her of being a detected spy on my looks, instead of blessing her in the fulness of a grateful heart as she merited, for these proofs of tender interest and anxiety for my health.

And now, by slow journies, we had reached our destination, which was Torquay, in Devonshire. We had both heard much of its salubrity, and the beauty of its scenery; nor were our expectations of the latter disappointed, for my Louisa was delighted with the beautiful villas in the vicinity, and the fine prospects they commanded; while my moodiness seemed to fade away before the influence of the mild climate, and fine natural productions it called into life.

Gratified by the improvement in my spirits, Louisa expressed a wish that we should hire one of the pretty villas, embosomed in trees, that had so strongly excited our admiration; and after a few days passed at the inn, we took possession of it.

Busied in forming our little establishment, the first week left no time for the indulgence of those gloomy reveries, which had, within the last two years, become habitual to me; and my wife, with all the natural buoyancy of her character, before grief and anxiety had clouded it, began to resume the smiles that added

such attraction to her fair and delicate face, while I marked the change with a pleasure long a stranger to my breast. And yet, there were moments when it struck me, that these smiles were forced, the better to conceal from me the anxiety to which my strange conduct must have given birth, so ingenious is suspicion in self-tormenting, and so prone was I to see every thing through the distorted medium of my fears.

Our child, too, grew daily more rosy and playful. Often would its dear mother place her on my knee, and the child would nestle her little head in my bosom, or smile in my face, or pat my cheeks with her little dimpled fingers. At such moments, I forgot my chagrin, and felt happy; but, alas! these gleams of joy were but of brief duration. Some unfortunate allusion to the past, inadvertently made by my wife, would, in a moment, put all my happiness to flight, and leave me, if possible, more moody than before, by the sudden contrast to my late feelings.

And now I sought oblivion of my cares in reading. I perused works the most likely to excite an interest in my mind, and occasionally they succeeded in effecting this; but if certain words occurred in the page — such as rock, precipice, cavern — though merely descriptive of scenery, and bearing no reference whatever to the tragical incident that gave a colour to my life — that fatal event was instantly brought as vividly before my eyes as the night it occurred — and I fell into a train of painful thoughts, that precluded reading for the rest of the day.

My wife, always an early riser, was accustomed to walk out in the morning while I slept, accompanied by the nurse-maid and her child. She spoke of having met a very interesting lady, similarly accompanied, who had taken great notice of our little girl. This lady, after meeting my wife a few times, stopped the nurse-maid, and asked permission to kiss our child, enquired its age, which happened to be nearly the same as that of hers,

who was not so large, commended the beauty of our little one, which was a direct road to the fond mother's heart; and, in short, an acquaintance had sprung up between the two youthful mothers, who met generally every morning in their walks, and, finding a sympathy in their tastes, took a mutual fancy to each other. Seeing that their meetings gave pleasure to my Louisa, I had not the courage to express my dislike to her forming an intimacy with a total stranger, of whom we knew nothing, except that she lived in one of the villas in our neighbourhood, was pretty, lady-like, doted on her child, and greatly admired ours.

Her husband was absent — their first parting, as she told Louisa, and she expressed so much regret at their temporary separation, and such a desire for his return, as to convince Louisa that her new acquaintance was as fond a wife as a mother. This was an additional attraction in her eyes. A fond wife and mother must be amiable, and there *could* be no reason why she should not cultivate an intimacy, which every interview served to ripen into friendship. Had I been the cheerful companion and tender friend she had expected to find in me, she would not have experienced the desire to form a friendship with any one else; but, accustomed to the constant society of her lost sister, her second self, as she used to call her, as well as to that of her excellent and highly gifted mother, their deaths had occasioned a void in her breast, which I, in the selfish indulgence of my moodiness, had not sought to fill up; and though she still loved me fondly, tenderly, she had discovered that she, nevertheless, wanted a friend to whom she could reveal all her thoughts, without the dread of giving pain or exciting gloom, and fancied that in our handsome neighbour she had found this friend.

Speaking of her one day in terms of high commendation, she expressed a wish, if I had no objection, to invite her to spend an evening with us.

"If you have set your heart on it," replied I, "and if my society is so irksome to you as to render the presence of this new acquaintance so very desirable, I will make no objection; though I confess I have a great dislike to female friendships, and more especially to those formed by chance, and with a perfect stranger."

My wife blushed, and a shade of disappointment passed over her expressive face.

"Let us think no more of it, dearest," was her gentle reply.

"My new frie —"

And here she paused and blushed again, substituting acquaintance for friend, which she had half uttered.

"My new acquaintance is so agreeable, so artless, and so good-natured, that I thought her society might amuse and interest you, as well as me, or I should not have proposed engaging her."

"I require no society but yours," answered I, coldly; "and I had hoped mine would be sufficient for your happiness."

There was more of reproach than tenderness in the manner in which I uttered these words, and she felt it, for she turned pale, and her eyes filled with tears, which she tried to conceal.

"What, tears!" exclaimed I, sternly. "Pray wipe them away, and at once write to your new friend to come here. Put my feelings out of the question, for I should be sorry that they interfered with your happiness."

"Happiness is a strong word," said my wife, gravely. "That blessing depends wholly on you, and our child, and has nothing to do with any one else."

"Nevertheless, you shed tears when I expressed my dislike to your forming an intimacy with a woman who, ten days ago, was a perfect stranger to you."

"Indeed, you mistake my feelings," observed my wife. "It was the coldness, may I add the sternness, of your manner, so unusual, that moved me. You are right, I dare say. You know so much more of the world than I do, who have passed all my life in solitude. Nay, smile not at my simplicity, when I confess that it never occurred to me to inquire the name of my new frie —, that is, my new acquaintance, and that if I obeyed your commands to write an invitation to her, I should not know how to direct the note."

Far from being disarmed by this *naïve* confession, which ought to have brought me to her feet, to solicit her pardon for having for a moment pained her, I delivered a lecture, more resembling that of a harsh pedagogue to his pupil than an advice from a fond husband to his wife, on the imprudence of forming acquaintance with persons whose characters, nay, whose very names, were unknown, and who might, under the most captivating exteriors, conceal the most reprehensible qualities.

"Be assured I shall never again fall into the error of forming any acquaintance unknown to you," observed my wife. "But pray do not imagine, inexperienced as I acknowledge myself to be, that with regard to my own sex, I could be deceived so far as to mistake an artful or designing woman for an innocent and amiable one; no, I feel as convinced that this lady is in every way worthy, as if I had known her for years."

CHAPTER XXI.

Although the warmth with which Louisa vouched for the worthiness of her new friend annoyed me, I could not resist admiring the purity of mind which, judging others by a self-knowledge, endowed all with whom she was brought in contact with some portion of the goodness with which she herself was so richly gifted. There is no surer proof of superiority and purity in women than their freedom from suspicion and belief in virtue; and if this confidence in their fellow mortals should occasionally be misplaced, its source is so admirable, that we should infinitely prefer it to that wisdom which is the forced fruit of worldly love, never acquired except at the cost of that purity of mind which is one of the greatest charms of the sex. There are many who have retained, and deservedly, unspotted reputations, and are wholly incapable of the slightest misconduct, yet have, unfortunately, been placed in positions where a knowledge of the dereliction of others from the true path has been forced on them; but this knowledge, however it may serve as a beacon, has sullied the purity of their thoughts, and deteriorated from their natural goodness, by teaching them to doubt.

The following morning my Louisa did not take her accustomed walk, and her cheeks looked the paler for the omission. I told her that this was wrong, and requested she would not forego an innocent pleasure. The truth is, that after a few hours' communing with myself, I became sensible of the unreasonableness of thwarting her desires, and anxious to atone for the formal lecture of the previous day.

While we were yet conversing on the subject, a double knock

at the door was heard, and a servant announced that a lady wished to see his mistress.

The new acquaintance of my wife entered ere he had time to conduct her to our sitting-room, and as cordially shaking hands with Louisa as if they had been friends for years, explained that, fearing my wife's absence had been occasioned by illness, she had called to inquire after her health. "I should have sent," added the stranger, and she laughed joyously while she spoke, "but I did not know your name. Is it not romantic and delightful, that we should have become friends, yes, absolutely friends, without ever inquiring each other's names?" and then she laughed again, with that child-like gaiety which is so captivating in the young and handsome.

"This is my husband," said my wife, still holding the hand of the stranger, and leading her to the sofa, on which she seated herself with all the ease of manner of an *habitué*. She was singularly beautiful, possessed a most interesting countenance, with lively, but gentle manners. When looking from one to the other of these two fair and youthful matrons, both still in the flower of youth, I could not help thinking they were formed to be friends. The same artlessness and gentleness characterised both; but the cheerfulness of the stranger, probably from her never having endured any trials, was more constant and joyous than that of Louisa. Her gaiety was infectious. It was like a sunbeam, diffusing light and pleasure around her.

"Now you have made me acquainted with your husband, I hope soon to make you acquainted with mine," said the stranger: "though, by the way, you have not told me his name." And she laughed again. "But what 's in a name?" resumed she; "'the rose (continuing the quotation) by any other name would smell as sweet.' The ugliest name in the world could not impair the effect you produce," and she looked fondly at my wife; "and yet, somehow or other, I am sure yours must be a pretty name."

"It is," Herbert, my wife was on the point of uttering; but the stranger, gracefully placing her beautiful little hand on her lips, exclaimed, "No, no, you must not tell me; I would not for anything destroy the romance of our acquaintance. It will be so delightful to tell my husband (who, *entre nous*, be it said, spoils me dreadfully,) that the friend — for, mind, I insist on our being as dear friends as if we had quarrelled through our childhood, as most female friends have done — the friend, I say, whom I most love, does not know my name, and I am ignorant of hers. And then I 'll bring him here, and you too will, I am convinced, become friends with him at once, for he is the dearest, *best* of human beings, and never committed a fault, unless it may be the having chosen such a little madcap as me for his wife." And her joyous laugh again echoed in the room.

It was impossible to resist the winning manners, the artless smiles, and the friendliness of this fascinating being. Even my moodiness gave way before her, and Louisa's gaiety returned.

"Now, let me see your beauteous little girl?" said she.

The child was brought in, and instantly recognised the lady, who took it on her knee, called it by a hundred endearing names, played with it until the child laughed and uttered various sounds of joy, and suffered itself to be kissed and played with, to the infinite satisfaction of the fair stranger, as well as its own.

"I must bring my little girl to visit this darling to-morrow," said she. "How I wish she was only half so pretty as yours. But I must not be dissatisfied, for my Matilda is a dear good pet, and so sweet tempered. You and I shall sit nursing together, *n'est ce pas?* like the mothers of Paul and Virginia. What a pity that one of our treasures is not a boy, for then they would be sure to fall in love with each other hereafter. See how grave your husband looks. I am sure he thinks me half mad. Don't you?" and she turned her beaming face towards me as if we had been old friends.

"No, not mad," replied I, with something like an attempt at gallantry, "but calculated to make others so."

"That is a very suspicious compliment; is it not, my dear friend?" remarked she to my wife.

"He never pays compliments," was the answer.

"So much the worse, for now it is clear he thinks that I am likely to drive my husband mad. But don't think any such thing, grave Sir, for he likes my foolish ways, and says he hopes I may remain a child until I play with my grandchildren. But, bless me, only look at the time-piece. What an unconscionable visit I have paid you! You will probably never let me in again," and she put on a contrite look.

My wife and I both assured her that her visit had given us unfeigned pleasure.

"Well, then, may I renew it this evening?" asked she; "I am so solitary when my darling is put to bed, that I fall into low spirits, and grow unreasonable and impatient for my husband's return, although I know he will come to me the moment he can. My poor eyes suffer when I read long by candlelight, and as he always reads aloud to me in the evening, I am without resource in his absence. Never did he leave me before, and never will I suffer his absence again. You 'll let me come, wont you?"

And she bade us an affectionate adieu, and went away, leaving us charmed with her.

"I am so glad you like her," said my wife. "There is something quite exhilarating in her gaiety, and it suits the character of her beauty, too, perfectly. She has told me so much about her husband, that I am sure he must be a very superior and amiable man."

I know not why it was, but I felt displeased at my wife's being so ready to take for granted that the husband of her friend was so superior and amiable. Was it, could it, be meant as a reproach to me? I pondered over this for some time; but when the even-

ing again brought our fair visitant in high spirits at having received a letter from her husband, announcing his return at no distant day, I yielded unconsciously to the genial influence she exercised, and we spent a few hours most agreeably. The vivacity of her mind, the sprightliness and talent that marked her conversation, exciting new trains of thought, produced a most salutary effect on me. If, for a moment, I relapsed into moodiness, she usurped the privilege of an old friend to reproach or banter me.

"You spoil this good man; indeed you do," observed she, addressing my wife. "You should not let him fancy (for be assured it is only hypochondriasis) that he is ill or low-spirited. Scold him well whenever he assumes a grave aspect, instead of looking anxious and alarmed, as I saw you do half-a-dozen times at least to-day and this evening, when he sank into a reverie. Show him no quarter, give him no time for reflection, and I will answer for it, you, as well as he, will find the advantage of my prescription."

Louisa looked timidly at me, to see how I bore this *persiflage*, and wondering that, on the very first day of my acquaintance with her vivacious friend, she should treat me so very unceremoniously; but when she observed that, *malgré* my efforts to look serious, I could not resist the playfulness of our guest, she ventured to join in the laugh in which her new friend was indulging at my expense.

The next day, and the following, a great portion of each, and the whole of the two evenings, were passed by this fascinating person at our villa, and every hour revealing some new attraction in her, and, above all, the artlessness with which she betrayed her admiration and affection for my wife, gained on my good-will so rapidly, that reserved and shy as my habits were, I lost all constraint with her, and enjoyed her society as much as Louisa did, who really, short as their acquaintance had been, already loved her as a sister.

The third evening from the first she had spent with us, the fair

stranger, my wife, and I, were chatting together on as cordial terms as if we had known each other all our lives. She began forming plans for the excursions we were to make together when her husband arrived, of the visit we were to make them at their seat in Yorkshire, she clapping her pretty little hands together with child-like glee at the pleasure she anticipated, when her servant arrived with a note for her. She hurriedly opened it, blushed to her very temples as she perused it, and arose to depart.

"My husband is arrived," said she., "and instead of coming for me, as I left word he was to do, he makes some foolish excuse, and begs me to return home as soon as possible. I shall certainly give him a severe scolding for his disobedience to my commands; that is, if I can restrain my joy at seeing him sufficiently to scold. Really, men are insupportable, are they not, *chère amie?*" turning to my wife, as she tied on her bonnet, and wrapped herself in her shawl. "My tyrant," resumed she, "will soon become as unmanageable as yours, if I don't at once assert my dignity. Look there, read his absurd note," and she threw it to me, as, after having embraced Louisa, she hastily left the room, declining my offer to conduct her to her home.

"What does the husband of our charming friend say?" inquired Louisa, as, leaning on my shoulder, she glanced over the contents of the note which I had began reading. They were as follows: —

"I am this moment arrived, and, impatient as I am to see you, I cannot, for reasons which I will give you when we meet, go for you, as you wished me to do, to Mr. Herbert's.

"You see that, although you don't know it, I am already acquainted with the name of your new friends, which I learned from one of our servants, when I inquired where you were. But more of this hereafter.

"Your fond husband,

"George Neville."

"George Neville," repeated I. "How very strange," the blood rushing to my very temples.

"Yes, very strange," reiterated my wife, imagining that my words referred to the purport of the note, and not to the name, which I instantly recognized as that of my old school-fellow.

"One might really be led to think that the discovery of our name presented the obstacle to which this Mr. Neville alludes," observed Louisa, the mantling blush of wounded pride and self-respect mounting to her brow.

The remark offended me, and the more so, that I knew it to be founded on truth; and when I caught her eyes fixed on my face, as if waiting for an answer to her supposition, or as if watching the effect it produced on me, I turned away vexed at the scrutiny, and anxious to conceal my emotion. Instead of simply stating the fact that a Mr. Neville, probably this very person, had been a school-fellow of mine, with whom I had been on such cold terms, that a meeting could not be agreeable to either party, I gave no hint whatever of the circumstance. The motive of this disingenuousness originated in a dread of being questioned as to the cause of my coldness with Neville, to relate the particulars of which, would not only be painful and humiliating to me, but would probably impair the respect and esteem I was so desirous my wife should entertain for me.

"You don't tell me your opinion, dearest?" said Louisa, gravely.

This pertinacity, so unusual on her part, increased my ill-humour, and there was a sternness in my manner, when affecting to forget the former remark, I reiterated the words "My opinion on what!"

"On the passage in Mr. Neville's letter that seemed to me to imply that the discovery of our name was the obstacle to his coming here."

"I had forgot all about it," replied I. "In truth, such a

puerility was not worth remembering. Our name could have nothing to do in the matter; but I suppose, that knowing his wife to be very giddy and unguarded, facts which her mode of making our acquaintance proves, he meant his not coming for her a reproof, and his remark that *he* had already discovered our name, though she was still ignorant, of it as another. You must admit, Louisa, that although a very charming and fascinating person, Mrs. Neville *is* very giddy and unguarded. She knew nothing whatever of us, yet forced, yes, absolutely forced her acquaintance on us. We might be the very reverse of respectable, for aught she knew to the contrary; she took not even the trouble to inquire our name, yet with an impetuosity to be met only in novels where the heroines rush into each other's arms at first sight, and vow eternal friendship, she made your acquaintance without introduction, came to our house, and established herself here with all the ease and confidence of an old friend. Is it not natural that her husband should disapprove, and resent such unthinking conduct, such a perfect solecism in etiquette and worldly usage; and I shall not be surprised, if, as a punishment to her, he should let the acquaintance drop."

I said this, to prepare Louisa for the line I fully expected Neville would adopt, but it by no means answered the desired end, for she observed, —

"I am so ignorant of worldly usages, that I am a bad judge on this subject, but candour obliges me to say, that when I saw a young mother, morning after morning, walking in the same path as myself, and apparently as fondly devoted to her child as I am to mine, I observed her with pleasure. Her beauty, and looks of kindness attracted; her notice of my child gratified me, and when she addressed me, I was quite as willing to make her acquaintance as she was to make mine. I could have certified that *she* was good, gentle, and pure-minded, and she, it appears, at once judged as favourably of me. You men, know not, cannot

know, the free masonry that exists between young mothers. A glance, a smile makes them acquainted. There was the blue sky above our heads, the calm sea beneath us, the umbrageous trees, the green fields, the flowery hedgerows; the carol of birds, and the breaking of the waves on the shore, were the only sounds that broke on our ears; and with two persons so ignorant of the ceremonious etiquette of society, it is not to be wondered at that we forget the propriety, if not the necessity, of a formal introduction. I say this," continued Louisa with much more animation than I had ever previously seen her evince, "to prove that Mrs. Neville was no more culpable of giddiness or unguardedness than myself. Had I met her advances with coldness, which it never could enter my head to do, she certainly would not have come here."

"Then let this serve as a lesson," said I, gravely, "not to break from the established usages of society, for be assured certain codes of etiquette were not formed until the necessity of such were felt," and I left the room to prevent the continuance of a discussion, in which I felt I should have the worst of the argument, so disposed was my wife to think well of her new friend, and so desirous to exculpate her from the charge of giddiness. Hitherto, Louisa had never offered any opposition to my opinions. If she adopted them not, she at least allowed them to pass unquestioned. Her warmth on this occasion, although it surprised and annoyed me, bore evidence not only to the generosity of her character, but also that she could think for herself — and this displeased me.

CHAPTER XXII.

The next day I noticed that Louisa appeared anxious and unsettled. She frequently walked to the window, looked out, then sate down again, took up her work, or a book, and in short, exhibited indubitable evidence of what, in vulgar parlance, is termed fidgetiness, a disease, if it may be so considered, of which I had never before seen the slightest symptom in her. Well did I divine the cause. She expected an early visit from her friend, and the indulgence of this expectation displeased me, knowing as I did, that it would not be gratified.

As the day wore away without the anticipated visit, or an explanatory note why it was so long deferred, her restlessness increased, and with it my dissatisfaction. Why should she attach so much importance to seeing a person of whose existence ten days before she was ignorant? Why not be satisfied with my society alone, as I was with hers? Such reflections increased my moodiness. I took up a book, with which I pretended to be occupied, but my eye was more frequently directed to my wife's face, than to the pages.

I proposed a walk to her, but she declined, on the plea that she should be sorry to miss seeing her friend, and Mr. Neville.

"I am sure he must be a most amiable and excellent person," said Louisa, "for his wife has told me so much of his high principles, generosity, goodness of heart, and equanimity of temper, that I have formed a high notion of him, notwithstanding the mysterious passage in his letter, which I confess has excited my curiosity."

These commendations annoyed me, and the more so, as I

fancied that Louisa laid a particular emphasis on the words equanimity of temper. This was a qualification which conscience whispered me I was far from possessing, for the trials I had endured had soured and irritated a temper not naturally bad; and, though well aware that I was but a cheerless companion to my gentle wife, I could not bear that she should be made more sensible of this painful fact, by the striking contrast presented by the husband of her friend, as related by his wife.

"You must not place implicit faith in the praises bestowed by Mrs. Neville on her lord and master," observed I, after one of those long pauses which so continually occurred on my part in our *tête-à-têtes*.

"Have you then ever met him, or heard aught to his disadvantage?" inquired Louisa, anxiously.

I hesitated at uttering the positive falsehood of denying that I *had* met him, and knew the nobleness of his character, so I avoided the question by saying. "I did not precisely refer to Mr. Neville, when I said the praises of husbands by their wives must not be too much depended upon. I dare say that you, dearest, boasted as much of my merits, or rather supposed merits, to your friend, as she did of her husband's?"

"No, not quite," replied Louisa, ingenuously, her cheek colouring as she spoke. "First, because she is so animated, and so much more loquacious than I am, that she gave me little opportunity to talk; and secondly, praising one's husband seems to me very like commending oneself."

The truthfulness and simplicity of this answer did not satisfy me. I took it into my head that there was a mental reservation in it; in fact, that not liking to reveal my gloominess of temper, my habitual silence, she had avoided any mention of me.

"Yes," resumed I, "your friend is indeed very loquacious. Heaven be praised, that in this instance you do not resemble her. Such a companion would drive me mad."

"Yet you appeared amused and interested by her conversation. I never saw you smile so often before, and marking how much her gaiety restored your cheerfulness, I wished that I possessed a portion of it in order sometimes to enliven you. I, too, felt its cheering influence. It reminded me of my girlish days," and she sighed deeply, "when my liveliness used to draw smiles from —"

Her voice faltered, tears started to her eyes, and she walked to the window to conceal them.

At that moment a servant brought a note for her, which she hurriedly opened, and she blushed deeply, as her eyes ran over the lines.

"Who have you heard from?" asked I, well knowing that she had no acquaintance at Torquay, except Mrs. Neville, and consequently that the letter must be from her. She handed to me, and then again turned to the window.

"You will be surprised, and I flatter myself as sorry as I am, when I tell you that when you receive this, I shall be some miles away on my journey to London. I had formed such pleasant projects for the next few weeks, to be passed in your society, dear Mrs. Herbert, and now my husband hurries me off to town, where business claims his presence. It is the first time I have had reluctance or regret in obeying his wishes. I should so have liked to see you again, for you have made yourself a place in my affection that absence will not destroy. Heaven bless you! Kiss your darling's lips for me, and give my compliments to Mr. Herbert. The carriage is at the door, and I have only time to add that though we may meet no more, I shall always remember you dearly. "MARY NEVILLE."

"How very strange this sudden departure seems," observed Louisa. "Coupled with Mr. Neville's note of last night, it really

appears as if he did not wish her to cultivate friendship with us, and hurried her away to avoid it."

I felt she rightly divined; yet, to avoid explanations, I was forced to deny it.

"Why," demanded I, "should Mr. Neville have any objection to his wife's friendship for you? There can be no reason that we should think so meanly of ourselves as to admit the possibility of ought so humiliating. The most fastidious can discover nothing in us to furnish a reason for avoidance, so do not, my dear Louisa, allow yourself to attach any importance to what, after all, may have proceeded from the simplest cause. Men have business connected with their properties, with which they do not always entrust their wives. They may be often called away on the shortest notice; and your acquaintance has been so brief with Mrs. Neville, that her husband would hardly have thought that any more ceremony than a farewell note could be necessary towards us."

"Yes, that I can imagine," replied Louisa. "But why say nothing of the invitation given us to visit them in the country. Why add 'though we may meet no more?'"

"You forget that Mrs. Neville is a high flown romantic person, who, annoyed at being forced to leave a new friend, in the fervour and exaggeration of her character, writes as if she were bidding you an eternal farewell. There are many such persons in the world, who, with heads heated by novel-reading, fancy themselves wretched at parting with some imaginary friend. Mrs. Neville is one of these, and wished that her parting from you should partake the romantic character that marked the commencement of your acquaintance."

"You do her injustice; indeed you do," said Louisa. "Be assured that she is warm-hearted, kind, and truthful."

"I will give her credit for every virtue and good quality with which you, my dear, in the plenitude of your generosity, choose

to endow her," replied I, "provided you let the subject drop. Think of her only as children do of the pretty butterflies that cross their path during a summer's walk, attracting them by their gay colours into a chase, which amuses for a short time, but generally ends in disappointment; for whether the insect be caught or escape, disappointment follows. If caught, its beauty is impaired, if not destroyed, by the grasp of its captor; if it escapes, it is regretted for a moment, and then forgotten. So with those summer friends formed by chance: if retained, time proves that they are much less attractive than they appeared at first; if they depart, they should be thought of no more."

My wife shook her head dissentingly, and I felt that my simile was too lame and impotent to serve my scheme of turning her thoughts from her friend.

And now we relapsed into our former dull and cheerless *tête-à-têtes*. A new prohibited subject was added to the previous ones; for Louisa, in compliance with my implied desire, never mentioned the Nevilles; although, on several occasions, the subject arose to her lips, as I could perceive by her sudden pauses in the midst of a sentence that was evidently leading to it. They often, too, recurred to my mind. Their sudden departure was a new proof of his generosity, and I understood it. He wished to avoid renewing acquaintance with me; yet how avoid it, with the intimacy that had sprung up between our wives, without betraying his disapprobation of me, and so inflicting pain on mine? To prevent this he had at once removed from Torquay; and I felt grateful for his tact and delicacy.

How strange is it that, although the memory of one fatal event haunted and filled my mind, ever interposing a dark cloud between sunshine and me, and continually reminding me of the truth of the lines of Moore — which I often caught myself repeating,

"One fatal remembrance — one sorrow that throws
Its bleak shade alike o'er our joys and our woes;
To which life nothing brighter nor darker can bring —
For which joy has no balm, nor affliction no sting!"

I was, nevertheless, highly sensitive to the assaults of minor troubles. I keenly felt the annoyance which the untoward meeting with Mrs. Neville had brought on us; and while making light of it to Louisa, it opened old wounds, which bled not the less, notwithstanding the more recent and terrible one, that bid fair never more to heal.

There was a gravity in the air and manner of my wife ever since the abrupt departure of the Nevilles that greatly vexed me. Could it be possible that she had divined that its cause originated in some motive for avoiding any intercourse with me? Had I simply and frankly owned that we had been school-fellows, and imbibed a mutual dislike, the abrupt departure would have been at once accounted for; but no — with the unhappy desire for concealment which marked my character, I had left her to dwell on a circumstance which my own reason was compelled to admit was, to say the least of it, mysterious. Why had I not told her the truth? Conscience answered the question. The high opinion she had formed of Neville, from all that his wife had told her of him, would, I conceived, induce her to think that our mutual dislike must have proceeded from some fault on my side rather than on his. *I* should be judged the culpable person because, unhappily, I had allowed my moodiness to throw a dark shade over any good qualities which I might possess; and contrasting the equanimity, the gay and open nature of Neville, with *my* gloom and reserve, even the partiality of a wife could not prevent mine from adjudging the superiority over me to him.

It was the consciousness of this that sealed my lips about my former acquaintance with Neville; but even in the bitterness of my feelings I was forced to admit, that Neville as far surpassed

me in every respect as even the bitterest of my enemies could pronounce. Oh! the pang which a conscious inferiority to a man who, if he scorns not, at least avoids one, inflicts! and yet who one has no right to demand satisfaction from.

It was not that I envied Neville. No; I truly and heartily admired the noble qualities that had won for him the popularity he enjoyed at school and at college, and which, I felt certain, would adhere to him through life; but I envied those who possessed his esteem, and bitterly repented that I had lost it. My heart yearned for a friend, but where was I to seek one? I had missed the most favourable opportunities ever afforded of laying the foundation of friendship — my school and college days. The boy who is an object of dislike in these minor theatres of life will have little chance of becoming a popular man when he enters on the great stage of the world itself; for he not only carries with him the defects which incurred dislike, but goes forth with the reputation of unpopularity, which will be prejudicial to him through life.

I had no relations, and my marriage brought me none. Two isolated beings, Louisa and I, stood alone in the world, with no relatives or connexions to introduce us into society, or to occasionally break the monotony of our solitude. I sighed when I remembered how gratified my wife had been by the society of Mrs. Neville. How rapidly her presence and innocent gaiety had made the hours fly the few evenings she had passed with us; and I caught myself wishing that my sweet, gentle, sensitive Louisa possessed her gaiety of heart and animation, forgetful that it was my gloom and moodiness that had clouded her natural cheerfulness, and imposed a constraint which I never had encouraged her to shake off.

How did the playful gaiety of manner of Mrs. Neville draw her out, as sun-beams do the closed flower, until it expands before its genial influence, putting forth its beauty and sweet-

ness; while I was as the cold bleak wind before which the mind of this gentle being closed itself, seldom allowing the treasures it contained to be revealed. Why could I not place her in a chosen circle, where she could soon form friends, and in which my moodiness might, if only for a few hours of every day, be dissipated, as it was in the society of Mrs. Neville?

While thus longing for an interruption to the monotony of our seclusion, I felt vexed and offended when the sadness or abstraction of my wife, betrayed that she, too, though perhaps unconsciously, desired society. Sometimes I would make a desperate effort to shake off my gloom, and become companionable. I would read aloud to her while she worked, or try to keep up a conversation. But the attempt was seldom crowned with success, because the effort was too painful to be long sustained, and I soon relapsed into silence and abstraction again.

Our child grew into health and beauty, and was the idol of us both. In her, we had one rallying point of affection, whence nought but pleasure could spring; she kept alive in our hearts that hopefulness, which, without her, would have been extinguished, for we were both fast sinking into a state of despondency, that seemed every day to increase. Oh! offspring of sacred blessing accorded to mortals, who, when they no longer indulge hope for themselves, are soothed by its smiles, delusive though they may prove for those dearer to them than life. Surely the least selfish of all human affections is that of parents for their children, which, leading them to look forward to their prosperity when they themselves shall be no longer on earth to witness or share it, makes them support trials and chagrin that might else prompt them to pray for a release from an existence become too heavy a burthen to bear. Yes, many a time did I forget my own misery, in gazing on the fair face of my child, and in praying that her destiny might be a less cheerless one than that of her wretched father.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Restless and unquiet, like all in my unhappy state of mind, I fancied that I should be less miserable elsewhere than in my present abode. I proposed to Louisa to change it, and she assented with a readiness that proved that she was no less desirous than I to leave Torquay. Indeed, ever since the departure of Mrs. Neville, she had ceased to take pleasure in the place, and I foolishly imagined, that in quitting it, and seeking a new scene, she would leave behind her the remembrance, of that regretted object of her regard, of which every walk reminded her.

"Whither shall we direct our course, dearest?" asked I, willing to be guided by her wishes.

"Where you will," was the reply, uttered in a tone of such utter despondence, as gave evidence that hope was paralyzed in her breast.

"But have you no preference?" demanded I, almost angrily, piqued by the hopelessness of her manner.

"All places are the same to me," answered she, "and I prefer leaving the selection to you."

"Let us try Sidmouth; that, I have heard, is a healthful and quiet place, though a much less picturesque and beautiful spot than this."

"As you like," responded my wife; and it was settled, that at the end of the week we should proceed to Sidmouth.

Unfortunately, two days preceding the one named for our departure, our little girl was taken ill. The best physician in the town was called in; and after some very anxious days, during

which our darling was in imminent danger, by his skill and attention she was saved, and shortly after pronounced convalescent.

Fondly as I loved our child, it was not until I saw her in a state that threatened every moment to deprive her of life, that I became aware how dear she was to my heart, and what agony her loss would occasion me. Parents who mix much in the world, and partake its amusements, can form little notion of the intensity of affection entertained by those who live in seclusion, and are in the habit of seeing their offspring many times in the day. My child was the sole sun-beam that shed a ray on my gloomy existence, and I felt, when I beheld her laid pale, emaciated, and almost senseless on her little couch, that if she were snatched from me I could no longer bear up against the weight of misery that was pressing on my heart.

I now asked myself how, with such a blessing, I had hitherto allowed despair to take possession of my soul? for the previous affliction which had clouded my life seemed light in comparison to the present threatened one. With what a different eye do we contemplate past and present trials! All the corroding grief that had followed the terrible event of the fatal night of my mother's funeral, faded away before the menaced death of my child, and I believed, as I bent in speechless agony over her couch, that if heaven spared her to my prayers, my joy would be so great, my gratitude to the Almighty so enduring, that henceforth, I would think only of atoning by every means in my power for the evil I had caused, and, triumphing over my own moodiness, bow with meekness to the chastisement inflicted by conscience, and study alone the happiness of my wife and child.

Louisa, pale as marble, watched the face of our child. No tear escaped her burning eye-lids, no word dropt from her fevered lips. Her life seemed to hang on that of her little girl,

and every other thought was banished. When at length the fearful crisis was passed, and the physician pronounced that with care, we might count on the recovery of our treasure, the change from despair to joy was too great for my poor wife, and she sank fainting on the couch of her child.

It was long ere suspended animation was restored; and during her insensibility, amid the alarm and anxiety it excited, I marked with a deep pang of remorse the alteration that had taken place in my poor Louisa. No longer the blooming creature, with symmetrical and rounded form, she had become prematurely care-worn and attenuated, and a curve between her brows bore evidence that sorrow and painful thought had left their traces there. And all this sad change had previously passed unnoticed by me — by me, who, notwithstanding my waywardness and moodiness, loved her with as true an affection as ever warmed the heart of man. The truth was, there was something in the clear, calm, searching glance of Louisa, before which mine recoiled with such nervous trepidation, that I dared not often meet it; for, haunted by the dread that she might have overheard some of the words I knew I was wont to utter in my sleep, I shrank from her gaze, and consequently did not often look on that fair face, so inexpressibly dear to me.

Now, at last, the havoc wrought on it by care became revealed to me, and I trembled lest death, defeated and disappointed of his prey in my child, might aim his dart at the life of my beloved wife. There was agony in the thought, but how was that agony increased when conscience whispered that it was I who had chased the roses of health from her cheek, and planted care in her breast! Many and fervent were the vows I made, that henceforth no effort on my part should be wanting to restore peace and bring back health to *her*, although *I* might never more hope for these blessings. And during the gradual recovery of our child, I kept my pledge. I sat by my precious Louisa, day after day,

as she watched over our little girl; devoted all my attention to these two dear objects of my tenderness; inventing many little amusements to beguile the tedious hours of confinement to the sick-chamber of my little daughter, who became so fond of me, that she could hardly be persuaded to allow me to leave her room. I procured the most dainty food, to tempt the feeble appetite of Louisa, and evinced such tenderness towards her, that by degrees she began to look more like her former self, and to treat me with the same confidence that marked her manner during the first months of our union. And although this restored confidence often led to her unconsciously inflicting many a wound that lacerated my heart, by references to the past, and by pointing out the increased resemblance of our child to her departed aunt, I suffered no symptom to escape that could reveal my pangs, which she, in the full belief that my nervous system was re stored to a healthy state — a belief that filled her with delight — no longer felt under the same constraint as of late.

The daily visits of the worthy physician, Doctor Western, had led to an intimacy with us which, heightened by gratitude for his having, under heaven, saved the life of our child, ripened into friendship. He had brought his wife and daughter, amiable and well-educated women, to visit my wife, who, finding them intelligent and agreeable, derived so much pleasure from their society, that she encouraged their attention; and one or other of them looked in most days, and often passed the evening with us.

My child's health being perfectly re-established, and my wife's much improved, we saw no reason to decline a pressing invitation from Dr. and Mrs. Western to drink tea with them, to meet a few friends. Accordingly, having seen our darling asleep, and left her nurse-maid employed with her needle in the room, we proceeded to the Doctor's abode. Some fourteen or fifteen persons formed the circle assembled there, and in two of the number I recognised, with no pleasurable feelings, my old fellow-colle-

gian, Mordaunt, with whom I had fought a duel, and in his wife, the *ci-devant* Miss Melville. Dr. Western, according to the old fashion peculiar to provincial towns, introduced his guests to each other, and as my name was pronounced, I noticed Mordaunt and his wife exchange glances, in which surprise was much more visible than satisfaction. They bowed coldly when the introduction to us took place. The husband looked embarrassed, and the wife — who, from a pretty, shy, and timid girl, was grown into a flaunting, *over-dressed*, coquettish-looking woman — who, bridled, tossed her head, affected to cast down her eyes when she met mine, and, in short, behaved as absurdly as a weak and silly country boarding-school girl could possibly do. It happened, by chance, that Louisa was seated between the mistress of the house and Mrs. Mordaunt, who stared at her, if not rudely, at least with a degree of curiosity that seemed greatly to surprise the object of it. After gazing at Louisa intently, she turned her glance to a large mirror on the opposite side of the room, as if to compare her own face and form with that of my wife, and then she would bridle, simper, and toss her head again. As I looked on her, I felt ashamed that I ever could have admired, or fancied that I loved such a being, for the contact with Louisa was so much to her disadvantage, as to draw attention still more to her showy, and, I may add, vulgar style of beauty, and ill-chosen finery. Never had my wife appeared to greater advantage than contrasted as she now was by Mrs. Mordaunt. Her calm and beautiful face, her distinguished air, the classic shape of her small and finely turned head, with its luxuriant raven tresses bound round it, and the simple elegance of her dress, combined to render her one of the most charming creatures ever beheld.

"Have you been long at Torquay?" inquired Mrs. Mordaunt.

The question being answered, and after a short pause, Mrs.

Mordaunt observed, "How very ill Mr. Herbert is looking. I hardly recognised him, he is so very much changed. I knew him when he was at Oxford," continued the lady; and she simpered and cast her eyes down. "I dare say you have often heard him speak of me?"

"Not that I remember," replied Louisa coldly.

"Perhaps not as Mrs. Mordaunt," resumed the lady, "but as Miss Melville, I 'm sure he has spoken of me."

"No, I never heard him speak of any one of that name."

"Then, I am sure it was because he was afraid of making you jealous, that he did not tell you how desperately in love he was with me, and how he wanted to marry me, and how he fought a duel about me with Mr. Mordaunt, and how I preferred Mr. Mordaunt."

Not a single syllable of this speech escaped my ear; and as I listened to it, I felt that I could, with pleasure, see her who uttered it consigned to the darkest cell of the county jail, as a punishment for her vulgar loquacity on the present occasion.

Louisa looked at her with undissembled astonishment, and there was a degree of natural *hauteur* in the stateliness of her air, as she replied,

"I confess, Madam, that my husband has never confided to me his boyish attachments."

"How very odd," said the incorrigible Mrs. Mordaunt. "Now, my husband has told me of every flame he ever had; and very jealous he makes me sometimes, when he talks of them, and praises them up to the skies. I was quite a simpleton like when I married him, but lately come from school, where Mrs. Dobson, the mistress, had taught us that we must seldom speak, and then hardly above our breath; cast down our eyes whenever any gentleman looked at, or spoke to us. I came to Oxford to live with my aunt Mrs. Scuddamore; and Mr. Herbert, your husband, was the first young man I knew. He thought when he saw me

casting down my eyes every time they met his, just as Mrs. Dobson had taught her young ladies, that I was in love with him, and so perhaps, I might have been, if I had not just then seen Mr. Mordaunt, who was so free and easy in his manner, and so flashy in his dress, that he took my fancy at once, and I thought no more of Herbert, who was so shy and melancholy like. Quite sentimental, as one might say. Well, I married Mr. Mordaunt, and ever since we have led such gay lives, going about from one watering-place to another, and leaving each the moment the novelty is worn off. We are never dull, for Mr. Mordaunt goes to the billiard-room or coffee-room of every place, where he soon makes friends. He is so free and easy, and he brings them home and introduces them to me, and we make pick-nick parties, and hire horses and ride about the country, and go to the plays, where there are any, and play cards at night; and as I am generally the only lady of the company, all the gentlemen are so polite and attentive to me, you can't think."

Louisa became more reserved and stately in her manner, as Mrs. Mordaunt naively revealed the mode of life she and her husband had adopted; but Mrs. Mordaunt's loquacity was not be checked, and after a short pause, she resumed,

"O! 't is such good fun having three or four gay young men constantly about one. They bring me novels from the circulating libraries, and such funny novels! How I laugh when I think how shocked Mrs. Dobson, who is the greatest prude in the world, would be, if she saw them; and would you believe it, they have taught me to smoke cigars, which I have got at last to like, though I hated them at first, and used to quarrel with Mordaunt about, for he is an inveterate smoker. Do you smoke?"

"Certainly not," was the brief reply.

"Well, I can tell you, that the most fashionable ladies at Paris smoke, and they are called lionesses. Why, I never could make out, not because they smoke I suppose! What makes

"I hardly recollected you, Mr. Herbert," observed she, "you are so dreadfully changed. I hope you have not been ill. Oh you need not look so shy, for I have told Mrs. Herbert all about your having been in love with me at Oxford."

"I really had quite forgotten that circumstance, Madam," replied I, gravely, "and had you not told me of it, I should still have believed there was some mistake."

"Mistake indeed!" reiterated the lady, "I wonder you can deny it when—"

But here Dr. Western, observing the paleness of my wife, came up, and drawing her arm gently within his, insisted on leading her to the next room, and making her drink some wine and water, and I accompanied them, leaving Mrs. Mordaunt in the middle of her sentence, and looking highly indignant at my denial of her statement.

"I fear, my dear Madam," observed the doctor, "that you have been talked to death by Mrs. Mordaunt. Her husband it was, who told me that he feared you were suffering under the infliction of what he termed her mad spirits and unguarded gossipry, so I went to the rescue. Mr. Mordaunt was very frank, and to a comparative stranger too," added the doctor, "for he told me that his wife was a regular mad-cap, and was always getting herself or him into scrapes by her tongue."

My wife faintly smiled, and introduced some other subject, avoiding to let Doctor Western know that her paleness had been at all produced by the loquacity of her neighbour. We waited by Louisa's desire, until the party had broken up, and she exerted herself so successfully to appear as usual, that no one save me could have discovered that while thus calm, nay even cheerful in appearance, her heart was a prey to anxiety and chagrin.

CHAPTER XXIV.

My poor wife little dreamt that I had heard the whole of Mrs. Mordaunt's conversation, and that I had writhed under the communications she had made. For a proud, a sensitive man, to hear revealed to the object of his affections, the person on earth whose esteem he most wished to preserve, such disparaging statements, was humiliation, was torture. To have my pure-minded, my high-souled Louisa, led to believe that I could ever have bestowed a thought on the vulgar, giddy, garrulous woman, whose appearance was now divested of every personal attraction, and whose manner and bearing reminded one of what might be expected from a female rope-dancer or rider at Astley's, was too mortifying to be borne. But to have her led to believe that I could have wished to marry such a person, was so derogatory to me, that I felt ashamed to meet her glance. But painful, humiliating, as all this was, there existed still stronger motives of chagrin for me in the disclosures made by Mrs. Mordaunt. Had she not revealed the suppositions entertained by herself and others with regard to my sanity, suppositions so calculated to confirm the suspicions of my wife on this point, (if indeed, as I feared, she had formed any such,) or to give birth to them if they had not previously existed, and had she not denounced my duplicity, nay more, my want of veracity, with regard to my former acquaintance with Neville, and the termination of it, a fact that explained at once the motive of the sudden departure of him and his wife from Torquay. My silence and concealment on this topic must inevitably lead Louisa to form the most disadvantageous opinion of me. If I had not been conscious of the wrong being on my side,

why should I have withheld the truth from her? My heart was lacerated as reason whispered these truths to me, and I cursed the hour, when, under the influence of a puerile *amour propre* that made me shrink from confessing to the partner of my life my former acquaintance and subsequent coldness with Neville, I had concealed the truth.

Not a word of reproach escaped the lips of Louisa, not even the most distant allusion to the conversation of Mrs. Mordaunt, or to that odious person herself. It may be easily imagined that I did not refer to a subject fraught with pain and shame to me, although it occupied my thoughts nearly to the exclusion of all others, for many days, ay, and nights too, after. Those alone who are of a nervous temperament, and who have experienced painful trials, can know with what terrible power all subjects of chagrin return to the pillow in the silence of night to torture and chase sleep away from him who most needs its refreshing balm! The cares which, during the day, are felt difficult to be borne, acquire tenfold power in the night, when only those with ruined health, or wrecked peace, count the tedious hours, and long for the light of day to scare away the shadows that encircle them.

I watched Louisa with anxious eyes, to discover the effect produced on her by the disclosures of Mrs. Mordaunt, but the only change I could observe was an increased paleness and sadness. Her manner to me was as kind as ever, nay, there seemed to me to be a sort of pitying tenderness in it, such as fond mothers evince towards their sick and suffering offspring. Yet far from being soothed by this gentle forbearance and pity, it offended, it irritated me, from a belief that it originated in her conviction of my intellects being in a most unsettled state, and I became again captious and gloomy, in spite of all my lately formed good resolutions.

Instead of reproaching myself for this relapse, I, with all the sophistry of selfishness, asked whether it was my fault that some

evil destiny — some malignant demon — was continually pursuing, irritating, and compelling me to break through my wise resolves. Was it my fault that the wife of Neville had crossed our path, and forced us, as it were, into acquaintanceship? Was it my fault that Mordaunt and his odious wife had come in contact with us, and that she, in defiance of every rule of good breeding, or decency, should have in one brief interview disclosed to my wife, an utter stranger, circumstances from which, had she been the oldest, dearest friend, a woman with common sense or delicacy would have shrank from even hinting at. No, it was clear to me at least, that I was the victim to a train of events over which I had no control, and from which it was useless to endeavour to escape. I was born under an unlucky star, from the malign influence of which it was in vain I tried to struggle: so I abandoned myself to the moodiness that cast its dark shadow over my home, and was daily destroying the peace of my admirable wife. Oh! the vanity, the folly, which leads erring mortals to believe themselves the victims of destiny — a belief so subversive of the courage and principle which enable us to resist adversity. No, conduct is Fate, and had I paused to reflect on the trials of my life, I should have found that all of them had originated in some fault of my own.

My wife and I called two days after the party at Dr. Western's, to take leave of the family, we having decided on quitting Torquay. The doctor was from home, but we found Mrs. and Miss Western in the drawing-room, into which we were ushered. I detected a look of surprise and displeasure in the countenance of Mrs. Western, as the servant announced us, which indicated that our presence was neither expected nor desired. Coldness and constraint had taken the place of the former cordial greeting we had been accustomed to receive, and the change in the manner of our hostess and her daughter was so visible, that we abridged our visit and took leave, heartily regreting that we had paid it.

When we left the house of Dr. Western an observation on the marked coldness of our reception arose to my lips, and I was on the point of giving it utterance, when the reflection, that it must have originated in some communication to my disadvantage, made by Mr. or Mrs. Mordaunt, occurred to me, and checked my comment. I could not bring myself to touch on a subject that must inevitably lead to the disclosures made to my wife by Mrs. Mordaunt, although conscious that she could not help feeling that the treatment we had just experienced must be attributed to the cause I had rightly divined. Louisa was silent and thoughtful during our walk; but as I glanced at her face I noticed that a deep blush was spread over it, even to her very temples, and I groaned in spirit, that *I*, who would have laid down my life to have saved her from one pang of regret, should be the means of drawing on her a coldness and contumely, when she merited only esteem and respect. But was I to submit to such treatment like a coward, conscious of having forfeited all claim to consideration? No, it was not to be borne! I would at once write to Dr. Western, and demand an explanation of the change in the manner of his wife and daughter when we visited them that day. I wrote a letter, and waited with no little impatience for an answer.

The doctor came, instead of writing, and I, seeing him from my window, went out to meet him, in order that Louisa should not know of our having an interview in my house, at which she was not to be present. He was considerably agitated when we met, and I, scarcely less so, but more versed in concealing my emotion, I appeared calm, and, to avoid interruption, proposed our walking towards the country.

"I am much pained, I assure you, Mr. Herbert," said he, "that Mrs. Herbert, for whom I entertain so high a respect, should have experienced any annoyance from any one under my roof. My wife and daughter are so little skilled in the usages of

society, that they have been, I fear, less urbane than could be wished, and —"

"Pray, Doctor," interrupted I, "say no more on this point, but simply inform me of the cause of the change in their manner. I surely have a right to demand this."

"I really am most pained. I hardly know what to do or say," said the doctor, and the embarrassment and agitation of his countenance and manner fully proved the truth of his assertion. "But I acknowledge, Sir, that you have a right to question me, and therefore I waive my own feelings in consideration for yours. The truth is, Mr. Herbert, Mrs. Mordaunt, whose garrulous propensities know no bounds, paid my wife an early visit, when I was absent from home, and related a whole pack of nonsense, probably wholly unfounded, but certainly to your disadvantage. Had I been present, I should decidedly have informed her that I never listened to ill-natured gossip; and if I could not succeed in checking her, would at least have prevented my wife and daughter from being influenced by her statements; but unfortunately —"

"Excuse me, Doctor; but pray inform me of the substance of her communications; for little importance as I attach to the opinion of such a silly and absurd person, it becomes necessary for me to know what statements she could have made that produced such an effect on your family."

"Why the only point in a confused mass of gossip that I could make any sense of was, — pray excuse me for repeating anything disagreeable, — that at college you were disliked; nay more, avoided by your fellow-collegians, who held no intercourse with you; and that when you challenged Mr. Mordaunt to fight a duel, you could not find any gentleman who would go out with you as a friend, until her aunt, Mrs. Scuddamore, prevailed on an old officer, a friend of hers, to accompany you. The lady added, that a Mr. Neville, whose wife had been staying here lately, and

who intended prolonging her sojourn had when her husband arrived, been hurried away the following morning, to prevent her associating with Mrs. Herbert and you. This statement, which I dare say is by no means correct, conveyed an impression to my wife and daughter, that there must exist some very strong grounds for this avoidance of you and Mrs. Herbert; and, unfortunately, before I could have removed this impression, you arrived a short time after Mrs. Mordaunt had left my house."

I thanked the doctor for his frankness, accepted with a cold stateliness his apologies and regret for the annoyance inflicted by his wife and daughter, but declined receiving a visit from them, which he pressed on me, and we parted.

Traces of tears were discernible in the eyes of Louisa when I returned home, but she, nevertheless, assumed a faint smile when I entered, and commenced talking of indifferent subjects, as if to turn my thoughts from painful ones. This tact and delicacy of conduct on her part, which ought to have produced only gratitude and tenderness on mine, led to irritating suspicions that wounded me. Why did she so carefully avoid recurring to the communication made to her by Mrs. Mordaunt, or to the marked change in the manner of Mrs. Western and her daughter? What could be more natural than that she should remark on it to me? Yet not a single word on the subject passed her lips; though, from the increased pensiveness of her countenance, and the traces of tears in her eyes, it was but too evident the subject painfully occupied her thoughts. Could it be that she believed the statements, and dreaded to provoke the fearful infirmity attributed to me? To defeat these terrors, I felt that I must henceforth be ever on my guard; that I must impose an incessant control over my words and actions; and the conviction of this necessity produced such an additional constraint, that my moodiness returned in spite of every effort to banish it.

I walked to the reading-room at Torquay, and from thence

wrote a letter to Mordaunt, demanding satisfaction from him for the statement made by his wife to the family of Dr. Western. I added, that I would remain at the library until his answer was sent there, which I requested might be as soon as possible. He did not let me wait long, for before I could have expected to hear from him, the following letter reached me: —

"My dear Herbert — If you will allow me to address you on the terms of good-fellowship peculiar to old college chums, I hope you will not expect me to be answerable for the sayings and doings of my wife, who is the most incorrigible gossip that ever a man was tied to. Ah! Herbert, you had a lucky escape from her. She is everlastingly getting me into scrapes with her tongue, and neither advice nor menaces can check it. As to giving satisfaction — which, I suppose, means nothing more nor less than going out to fight — I must decline it; for, having established my character for courage by our former duel, from the consequences of which my health has never wholly recovered, I have determined on never again fighting. But I am ready to call on Doctor Western, and contradict every word my wife may have said; and also to give from under my hand the most complete denial of the truth of any of her assertions to your disadvantage, as well as the strongest apology I can write for my wife's unfounded gossiping. In fact, I am ready to do anything you wish, except to fight, and am already sufficiently punished by being cursed with a wife who would embroil me with half the world if she could. Little did I think, when I married a girl who was always blushing and casting down her eyes, that she should turn out the greatest hoyden and gossip in the world. I longed to go up and shake hands with you the other night at Dr. Western's, but I did not know you might take it; but be assured, my dear Herbert, that I am very truly yours,

"W. Mordaunt.

"P. S. — On reflection, I think it best to send you at once an apology; and when I have dispatched this, I will call on Dr. Western and contradict all my wife's statements."

The apology was as follows: —

"My dear Herbert — Accept my heart-felt regrets and humble apology for the misstatements made by my wife, which I trust you will look over, and attribute to her incorrigible habit of gossipping. I acknowledge that every syllable she uttered to your disadvantage was wholly untrue; and I cannot express half the regret I feel that you, for whom I entertain the highest esteem and respect, should be for a moment annoyed by her. Believe me, my dear Herbert, sincerely yours,

"W. Mordaunt."

Disgusted with the cowardice which dictated these epistles, I blushed for the man who could have written them; and although I longed to show them to Louisa, a sense of shame for the baseness of the writer checked the impulse.

I had been some time absent from home, and when I returned I found my wife looking even more pale and languid than when I had left her. Her spirits, too, in spite of her endeavours to appear cheerful, were more depressed. I questioned her about her health, declared my conviction that she must be unwell, and proposed sending for Dr. Western; but at the mention of his name a blush overspread her face, and she promptly and firmly declined seeing him, adding that she felt sure she should be better when we left Torquay, for that the climate was too soft for her, after having been so long accustomed to the keen air of the Welsh mountains. In the course of the evening Dr. Western came to show me the letter of Mordaunt. Louisa was present when he was announced, and motioned to leave the room, but I requested her to stay; and then,

after many humble apologies for his wife and daughters' reception of her at their last interview, he handed me Mordaunt's letter to him, and I gave him the apology addressed to me. Both were shown to my wife, and her eloquent countenance flashed with indignation and contempt as she perused them.

"I wonder you could have condescended to notice the gossip of such a woman, or demand satisfaction from such a man," said she, proudly, to me. "You should have treated both with the contempt they merit."

And she threw the letters carelessly on the table.

"Yes, Mr. Herbert," observed Doctor Western, "such persons are indeed unworthy of notice, and I shall never cease to regret that my wife and daughter should have placed the least faith in the assertions of Mrs. Mordaunt, who shall never again be permitted to enter my doors."

I had suspected that Louisa's was a proud nature, but her whole manner during this interview convinced me that my suspicions had underrated the extent of this peculiarity in her. The conviction offered no balm to my wounded mind; for, aware by sad experience of the pain inflicted on the sensitive by the contumely of even those they value not, I felt the deepest sympathy for her.

CHAPTER XXV.

Those who have passed their youth in the seclusion of a country residence, surrounded by humble, but faithful followers, who, knowing and liking them from infancy, are prone to magnify their good qualities, and to pass over their defects — are precisely those who are the most keenly alive to aught that betrays a want of esteem and respect towards them. A contact with others of the same grade in life, commencing in childhood, by imperceptible degrees, habituates persons to the trivial slights and annoyances that, in their little world, as in the great one, for which it serves as a preparation, never fail to occur. Louisa's childhood and girlhood, passed in Wales, with no society, save that of her sister and mother; and mine, who loved her nearly as fondly as did her own, and looked up to with little short of adoration, as she and her family were by their humble neighbours, — had never been prepared for those annoyances to which a contact with general society invariably exposes the proud and sensitive.

The first wound, and it was a profound one, inflicted on her pride, was the unlooked for departure of Mrs. Neville, and the letter holding out no prospect of future intercourse, after all the plans of long visits to be mutually paid. Conscious that her own life, and that of her parents, could offer no cause for avoidance, she, naturally enough, concluded, that something in my past conduct must have furnished the motive; and this conclusion filled her with sorrow and shame. To bear a dishonoured name, was terrible to a creature with her proud and lofty spirit; but to love one who was shunned and avoided, — that one, too,

the husband of her choice — the father of her child — was torture. Then came the reflection, that never had she heard me refer to former friends or companions, — never knew me to receive letters from, or write to any such, — though all who had been at a public school, and at college, must have formed acquaintances. This reflection, which might never have presented itself to her mind, had not the conduct of the Nevilles given rise to it, now flashed on her, inflicting all the pangs peculiar to wounded pride and womanly delicacy. Then came the recollection of my frequent fits of deep abstraction, my constant moodiness, and my strange ravings during my troubled slumbers.

Some cause must exist for all this; and coupling with it, the avoidance of Neville, to come in contact with me; how, with all her affection for me, could the wife of my bosom fail to think — though the thought was agony — that I had committed some crime in the eyes of society, that banished me from its pale? Nevertheless, she ceased not to love me. A heart like hers was too noble to turn from him, to whom it had vowed allegiance, because all others avoided him; and, with a heroism to be found only in woman, she determined that whatever might be the sin that had sent me forth from society, *she* never would shrink from the object of her first, her only love, — the father of her child. Oh! if her tears — her prayers — the sacrifice of her unspotted life, could wipe away my guilt, how willingly would this angel, accorded to me by a pitying Providence to walk by my side through the gloomy vale of life, have offered them? And I, contemning the pangs she was enduring, incapable from my grosser nature, and less elevated mind, from appreciating a character like hers, remained in ignorance of the inestimable blessing lent me; and, instead of kneeling to her as to a guardian angel, and pouring forth to her all the errors of my youth, and the consequences they had entailed, (leaving only my one dread secret unavowed,)

maintained a reserve calculated to confirm her worst fears, and saw not the fatal effect her anxiety and wretchedness were producing on her delicate frame.

But let me not anticipate. Believing that the Devonshire air did not agree with my wife, I determined to direct our course to London. In that vast metropolis, I hoped that both our minds might be directed from the *triste* thoughts that had taken possession of them, by the busy crowds that would beset our path, and by the various scenes of amusement it presents. When I consulted Louisa on the subject, she merely answered, "where you will; all places are alike to me." The tone of deep despondence in which this was uttered, pained me deeply, and I endeavoured to discover whether she might not prefer some other place. But with her, as she said, "all places were alike;" an assertion that proves such internal happiness, as to be independent of places; or such misery, that no hope is entertained that any change can bring relief. Alas! the latter was the case with my poor wife; and *I* — I who had entailed unhappiness on her, was angry that she should so keenly feel it. Often have I noticed tears fill her eyes, as they bent on our child, whose rosy cheeks offered a sad contrast to the pallid ones of her mother, and whose dimpled smiles seemed to mock the sorrowful countenances of the authors of her being.

Arrived in London, we took up our abode at an hotel in Albemarle-street, until I could procure a small ready furnished house.

The noise and the bustle of the moving mass in the street, drew the attention of Louisa, and seemed, for a short time, to divert her from the sadness that was become habitual to her; but after some time, a sense of our loneliness in that vast world, where each individual composing the great crowd, hurried on, intent upon his own business or pleasure, struck her; and sinking back in the carriage, tired and exhausted, I saw tears drop

from her closed eye-lids, while our little girl clapped her dimpled hands, and laughed aloud in delight, at the various novel objects presented to her view in the vast Babylon, now seen for the first time.

The next day I sallied forth, alone, in search of a house, Louisa feeling too much fatigued to accompany me. I first proceeded to my old acquaintance, Mr. Vise, with whom I had lately kept up no intercourse, and found that he had been some time absent from England. I was annoyed at this circumstance, for he was the sole acquaintance I possessed in London, and had always evinced a desire to oblige me. After looking at several small houses, none of which pleased me, I at last found one likely to suit in Wilton-street, and the terms being agreed on, I was leaving it, when the mistress of it told me, she expected a reference, as it was always her custom to demand one: she hoped I would excuse her being so particular, but in London it was absolutely necessary.

The disadvantages of my isolated position never struck me more forcibly, nor more painfully, than at this moment. How could I avow to a stranger that I did not know a single person to whom I could refer? After an awkward pause, I took courage to say, that not liking to trouble any of my friends, I would, if equally agreeable to her, pay a month's rent in advance, and continue to do so while I remained in her house.

"Well, Sir, your appearance is so respectable, that I will, for once, break through my general regulations," replied the landlady; "and I dare say I shall have no reason to regret it."

It was agreed that we should take possession the following day, and I returned to the hotel. On ascending the stairs I met a lady, who no sooner saw me than she exclaimed —

"Bless me, if it is not Mr. Herbert! I am so glad to see you," and she seized my hand, and shook it cordially. "But you must come into my room, I have a thousand things to say to

you," and she still held me by the hand, when, at this moment, Louisa, who was crossing the corridor from her sitting-room to her bed-chamber, stood before us. Seeing our recognition, Mrs. Scuddamore, for it was no other than her, immediately said —

"Your wife, I suppose. Pray, introduce me. Mr. Herbert and I are old acquaintances, Ma'am, and I am very glad to meet him again. Will you walk into my room, or shall I have the pleasure of going to yours. It 's quite the same to me. I 'm a soldier's widow, almost an old soldier myself, and never stand on ceremony."

Louisa looked at her with surprise and timidity, while *I*, who would willingly have avoided meeting her, saw no means of getting rid of her proposed visit, and so led the way to our sitting-room.

"Upon my word, Mr. Herbert, I congratulate you on your choice in a wife," said Mrs. Scuddamore. "A very charming young lady, but looking a little delicate, I am sorry to see. You are aware, I suppose, that my poor brother is dead. Yes, poor man, he is no more. He was an excellent person, but as ignorant of the world as a child: knew nothing of life, at least of military life, and never could comprehend its codes and regulations. Poor Captain Brady, I grieve to say, is also dead. His death was a severe blow to me, it broke the last link of my military associations. Ah! Mr. Herbert, it is sad to think how all one's old friends pass away. I was reading an Army List this morning — I always do read the Army List as regularly as when my dear departed Colonel was alive — and I could hardly find an old brother officer still remaining. Poor Captain Brady has left me all he possessed. It was not much, but it proved his attachment to the widow of his commanding officer. You remember how well he behaved when I had him to go out as your second? You have heard, I suppose, that my niece married one of your adversaries?

I never approved the match, because I knew Mordaunt to be so deficient in courage, that, had he been in the regiment of my lamented husband, he would have insisted on his leaving it. How my niece, who knew my sense of honour, could have married him, I cannot make out! She is greatly changed, and I cannot say for the better, for she has turned out a hoyden and a gossip; and, had she been the wife of any officer in Colonel Scuddamore's regiment, I would have either conquered her levity and habit of *bavardage*, or have had her sent to Coventry. Ah! Mr. Herbert, you had a happy escape from marrying her. And pray what was your wife's maiden name?"

"Maitland," was the reply.

"Any relation to Major Maitland, who exchanged from the 62d Foot to the 87th; a brave man, and a very good soldier."

"No relation, Ma'am."

"Perhaps she descends from General Maitland, who, for a long time, commanded the Fusileers, and was remarkable for keeping his regiment in the highest order? A little of a martinet, to be sure."

"No, Ma'am, I never heard of any such relations."

The nurse here brought in our child, and Mrs. Scuddamore, having looked at her, said —

"A boy, I hope; if so, I will use my influence at the Horse Guards to procure him a commission when he is old enough."

The sex of the child being explained, an expression of deep disappointment stole over the face of Mrs. Scuddamore.

"I am sorry," said she, "for I think it is a pity that there should be so many girls in the world. What can one do with them? whereas boys can always be put into the army or navy, and serve their king and country. Are you going to dine at home, good folk? If so, I will order my rations to be served in your room, and join your mess. It will be more sociable, and I hate dining alone."

What could we do but submit as well as we could to this infliction — and a very great one my wife and I felt it to be? How did we rejoice that we had secured a house, into which we were to move the following day; for to be longer exposed to the free and easy manner of Mrs. Scuddamore, we both felt would be unbearable.

In due time, the dinner was served. Mrs. Scuddamore's rations, as she termed a mackarel, *bœuf steak aux pommes de terres* and her half pint of sherry, being placed on our table; and during the repast, she ceased not to pass in review the different regiments with which that of her husband had been quartered, and the improvements which she had effected, interspersed with various military anecdotes, which she related with great spirit, to the no slight astonishment of my wife, who was almost disposed to think her an old soldier in female guise.

"I am looking out for a house," said the lady; "I can't afford an expensive one, being, as soldiers say, on half-pay; but I must pitch my tent near some of the military establishments, where I can, daily, see and converse with the old soldiers: for I am like a fish out of water when I don't see red coats."

I had hoped that for once Louisa might have been amused by the originality of Mrs. Scuddamore — so unlike anything she could ever have met with before — but I was disappointed. Her coarseness and freedom of manner excited only disgust in the mind of my wife, who shrank from her with instinctive dread. Some allusion having been made to Wales, Mrs. Scuddamore said, *à-propos* of Wales, —

"Did you know that beautiful young girl whose sudden disappearance was noticed in the provincial papers, and whose body was found, six months after, in the river? I remember an artist, who is a distant relation of mine, showed me a charming portrait he made of her, but a few weeks before her tragical death."

I felt Louisa's eyes were fixed on me, and I would have given worlds to appear unmoved; but the effort at self-possession was beyond my strength. A cold shudder passed over my frame, and I was conscious of turning very pale.

"Are you ill, Mr. Herbert?" inquired Mrs. Scuddamore. "Do let me ring for a glass of *liqueur des braves* for you; or, perhaps, a little brandy and water would be better. You really look quite livid."

Before I could frame a reply, if, indeed, I could have found utterance for one, my wife said, with a sorrowful but calm countenance, —

"Alas! Madam, the tragical circumstance to which you referred occurred in our family; the person whose loss we must ever deplore, was my sister."

"Indeed, I am quite shocked. Your sister! I had not, I assure you, the slightest notion. If I had, I would not of course have alluded to it. Your sister was it, or Mr. Herbert's? for *he* seems to feel so *very* much, that I —"

"*My* sister, Madam," replied Louisa, "but Mr. Herbert, although he never saw her, took so deep an interest in our affliction, and had such a painful and melancholy duty to perform towards the dead, that all reference to the sorrowful subject affects him powerfully,"

And she wiped away the tears that chased each other down her pale face, and gave me a look of mingled affection and gratitude, the latter sentiment re-awakened by the recollection of my conduct on the sad, sad occasion so painfully brought to her mind. I could have fallen at her feet and embraced them, for this proof of her utter freedom from suspicion, and the sacrifice of her own feelings to mitigate the effect on mine! And I had doubted the candour of this admirable creature, and suspected, ay, no later than a few minutes before, that the glance she gave me when the obtuse Mrs. Scuddamore introduced this fatal subject, originated

in a curiosity to know how it would affect me, and in a desire to discover my terrible secret!

"And was it never ascertained how she met her death?" resumed our callous tormentor.

"Never," replied my wife. "But, spare us, Madam, the subject is too painful, the wound too recent to be *touched;*" and she covered her face with her handkerchief, and wept in silence.

"I am sorry to have grieved you," observed Mrs. Scuddamore, "but to those who, like me, have seen a field of battle with hundreds lying dead and dying, covered with ghastly wounds and gore, the death of one single individual, and by so easy a death as drowning, appears so light and different to what it must to persons like yourselves, who have never witnessed such scenes, that I did not think I should have pained you by recurring to the loss in your family."

Mrs. Scuddamore left us, to our great relief, a short time after, and when the door had closed on her, my wife exclaimed,

"O! never, dearest, let me see that odious and unfeeling woman again; she has made me feel quite ill and nervous."

CHAPTER XXVI.

We removed into our new abode in Wilton-street the following day, taking especial care to conceal our address from Mrs. Scuddamore. Louisa was pleased with the house, and the landlady, who was waiting to receive her, took such a fancy to her and our little girl, that she unlocked some of her store of ornaments and comforts, never, as she carefully explained to us, given the use of to any of the tenants of her dwelling, "unless," said she, "as in the present instance, when the lady was more than ordinarily nice." And now, having established ourselves, I determined to amuse my wife by showing her the sights of London. It gave me pleasure to see the interest she felt in the fine arts, and how intuitively her pure though uncultivated taste, led her to admire the best productions, while she turned from all meretricious ones. I, too, felt amused during the hours in which we visited the public and private galleries, for which we obtained admission, as well as the studios of the most remarkable artists, and not only did the mornings pass pleasantly in this manner, but the sights seen furnished topics for the evenings. We visited the theatres, too, and Louisa, passionately fond of music, was delighted with the opera. The ballet startled her unsophisticated notions of propriety so much, that after the first she witnessed, she expressed a desire never to see another; and I did not attempt to change her opinions on this subject, having formerly felt some surprise how modest women could tolerate the indelicate exposure of so many of their sex.

There are few things more agreeable than accompanying the woman one loves, to the places worthy of attention, in a large

capital! The originality of Louisa's mind, and the natural good taste she possessed, lent a fresh attraction to whatever we saw, and as I noticed the pleasure *she* experienced, and felt the advantage I derived in having my attention drawn from my own sad thoughts, I was disposed to regret that I had not sooner brought her to London. Even the isolation in which two persons, without acquaintances, but who love each other, find themselves, draws them more closely together, and in the vast crowd of strange faces, and in the loud hum of unknown voices, they turn with increased tenderness and dependance to each other. After some weeks passed in sight seeing, I began to fear that Louisa was over fatigued by the exertion, for her appetite failed, she grew thin, and pale, and got a slight cough. She made light of all this, and when I wanted to call in a physician, dissuaded me from it, saying, that now she had seen all the London sights, she should have time to recover from her fatigue, and get well again. Thinking a little country air might be of service to her, I took her, and our nurse and child, every fine day on some little excursion in the environs of London, and the beautiful scenery so charmed and delighted her, that the exhilaration of spirits it produced lured me into the hope that she was really deriving benefit from them. But, alas! the relief was only temporary. Fatigue and exhaustion followed every exertion, and, no longer to be blinded by her assertions that her indisposition was not of a grave character, I called in a physician of the highest repute, to attend her, and awaited his sentence with as much terror, as a culprit ever did that of his judge. Yet, though filled with a terror that almost paralysed my mind, I could not bring myself to think that *I could* lose her! How could I bear to live without her who was the very soul of my existence, the strong tie that bound me to life? No, the blow was too terrible to contemplate, and like many a wretch under similar misfortune, the consciousness of my utter inability to support it, led me to believe it impossible.

The physician came, and although his guarded manner might have imposed on any one less deeply interested in ascertaining the truth than I was, it did not deceive me. The questions he put, at once revealed to me that he suspected consumption to be the malady he was called in to minister to, and the answers were, alas! but too well calculated to confirm his worst fears. And she, looking beautiful as ever, her eyes even more lustrous than when in perfect health, and a light pink spot on each cheek, appeared as calm and fearless while replying to his inquiries, as if only the most trivial malady was in question.

"Any pain in the chest and side?" demanded the physician.

"Yes; but not a great deal."

"Cough troublesome; and more especially at night?"

"Yes, rather troublesome."

"General feverishness, followed by languor?"

"Yes, but after all I really do not feel nearly as unwell as Mr. Herbert seems to think," and a smile, half playful, half reproachful to me for needlessly alarming myself passed over her lips. — The Doctor wrote a prescription, recommended the least stimulating regimen that could be adopted, milk to form a principal part of her food, and then withdrew.

I attended him to another room with a beating heart, longing, yet trembling to inquire his opinion of his patient. The gravity of his countenance prepared me to expect nothing favourable, yet when he confessed his fears that the case was a pulmonary one, the shock nearly overcame me. He recommended change of climate, said her youth was much in her favour, advised her going to Nice, with as little delay as possible, and laid great stress on the necessity of her mind being kept quiet, and her spirits cheerful.

"If you betray your alarm, Sir, it will naturally have a bad effect on her," added the physician. "Come, you must really bear up. I will look in again to-morrow, but I advise no time being lost in your trying the efficacy of a milder climate."

I swallowed a glass of water, and hastened to join my dear Louisa, forcing a cheerfulness of aspect and manner, while my heart was a prey to wretchedness. All my efforts could not conceal from her that I was agitated; perhaps it was my assumed cheerfulness, so unreal, that revealed the truth, but no sooner had I entered the room, than looking affectionately at me, she exclaimed, "You must not, dearest, be alarmed about me; I assure you there is nothing of any serious consequence the matter. If there was I would tell you at once."

Alas! this very security on her part, was one of the general symptoms of the fearful malady I suspected the existence of, even before the physician had verified the fact.

I feared that the huskiness and tremulousness of my voice might betray my emotion, and hesitated for some time before I dared speak.

"I see that the doctor has frightened you, dearest," said she, placing her hand in mine. The hand was burning, and bore fearful evidence of the truth of his opinion.

"No, my love," replied I, "he has not frightened me; but he told me it is absolutely necessary for the health of us both, that we should go to a milder climate."

I feared she might be averse to going abroad solely on account of her own health, but knew that if she was led to believe it necessary for mine, she would at once consent; so therefore I used this artifice.

"I knew you were not well," said she; "I was quite certain of it for a long, long time, though you would not acknowledge it, and if the doctor thinks going abroad will do *you* good, I have not the least objection, though I don't think it at all necessary for *me*."

I pressed her to my heart, and thanked her for this ready accordance to my wishes, adding that I hoped she would be ready to leave England in two or three days.

The preparations for our journey were soon made, and within four days from the first visit of Doctor Harford, we were *en route* for Nice.

And now a new epoch seemed marked in the page of my troubled life! The one terrible event that had coloured it, and which had fixed itself in my memory with a tenacity that defied every effort to weaken its impression, now faded away before the new and all-engrossing feeling of dread, occasioned by the danger of my wife. This dread haunted me by day, and left me not even in my dreams. I would gaze on that beautiful face, instinct with the soul's meaning, and ask myself, could it be possible that death had already marked her for his prey, — that in a few months, it might be hidden in the dark and silent grave! I would listen to the tones of that low, sweet voice, and shudder at the thought that it might soon be hushed for ever, leaving no echo save in my tortured heart, until the menaced calamity seemed too mighty, too overwhelming for possibility, and I have said, "No, no, it would be too, too dreadful; all else but this I could bear."

The belief that I was ill awakened all the tenderness of my adored wife, — a tenderness so soothing, so touching, as to increase mine to torture. No, not even in the intoxication of passion, when, in all her bridal charms, she first blessed my fond arms, did I love her as now, — *now*, when I dreaded that every day might bring our separation nearer.

Yet still she declared she felt no worse, though every exertion proved that there was less strength to bear it than before, and the increasing alteration of her form betrayed the ravages of disease. Her cough, too, became more troublesome, her nights more restless; but she bore all without a murmur; and so placid was the state of her mind, so cheerful her manner, that few could have believed that her life was in danger.

We only stopped on the road a sufficient time to rest her, and

reached Nice by easy journeys, in little more than a fortnight after we left England. But even in that brief time, a fearful change had made itself visible in my wife's state of health. Her features had assumed a sharpness, her eyes seemed to have entered more profoundly the large dark orbits in which they were set; her chest, formerly so symmetrically round and prominent, appeared flattened and narrowed, and her finely formed throat, as if too weak to support her head, rested languidly on one side, always requiring a pillow to rest on.

And yet she talked of her recovery as if it were a thing to be by no means despaired of, formed plans for the future, that future which my foreboding heart told me was not reserved for her, and chided me when she detected in my countenance or manner, any indication of the alarm which filled my breast. I procured the most comfortable lodging that was disengaged at Nice, but even that was very inferior to what she had been accustomed to in England, and greatly did it pain me to see that no effort or expense could secure her the many little articles of luxury, so essential to an invalid, confined wholly to the house.

I went to an English physician established at Nice, the morning after our arrival, and he accompanied me to the hotel, to see Louisa. His first injunction was for her not to leave the house while the *bise*, as he termed it, was set in, as at present, for it was most trying to invalids. It was, therefore, a week or ten days after the lodging procured had been ready for her reception, before she could be removed to it, and when she was, a fresh cold, although every possible means had been adopted to guard against it, had been taken, which produced increased irritation in the chest. Still, not a complaint escaped her lips. It seemed as if increased suffering only called forth more prominently new proofs of that angelic sweetness of temper and patience for which she had ever been remarkable.

Oh! the torture, the agony of beholding a creature

dearer, ten thousand times dearer to one than life, supporting the most acute disease, and yielding without a murmur to the decree of the Almighty! At length, the total prostration of her strength gave her, as I believed, the first notice of her real state. She had been every day lifted in my arms from her bed to her sofa, and hitherto had been able to assist herself a little in the operation, and to clasp my neck while I conveyed her. But on this occasion, I found she was utterly helpless from weakness, and her fragile hands dropped listless from my neck, unable to continue their grasp. A passion of tears followed. She wept long, and looked at me through her tears, with a glance full of such unutterable tenderness and regret, that, unable to conceal my emotion, I sobbed aloud.

"I see, I feel, dearest, that I must soon go hence," said she. "It was so sweet to be cared for, to be nursed with such tenderness as I have been by you, that I forgot, in the happiness it afforded me, that danger might lurk in the illness that called forth such precious proofs of love. To leave you now, when I know how dear I am to you, and to leave our child, too, — oh! it is a terrible trial for your poor Louisa;" and she wept afresh, while I pressed her to my heart, and she reclined her head on my shoulder. "And yet, it seems impossible, too," resumed she, "with all this hoard of love here," and she pressed her hand to her heart, "with all the bright hopes of a life to be passed with you, and our child. Yes, it does seem as if it cannot be true that I am to be torn from you."

"Let us hope, dearest, that you may yet be spared," whispered I, though my heart belied the hope I would fain give.

"No, no, do not cheat me with false hopes, but try to give me courage to bear the doom that awaits me. Teach me to support our coming separation as I ought, as a Christian woman, who trusts in the mercy of her Redeemer, should, and who looks

forward to being re-united to those loved on earth, in that better world, where no partings are."

But, although resigned to the will of her Creator, and daily preparing her mind and mine, for the earthly separation she knew to be inevitable, any amelioration in her state, a better night, a day more free from pain or cough, gave her hope that her life, if not saved, might be prolonged; and it was only by the increased sadness that stole over her when she found the hope illusive, that I knew it had been indulged.

I could not bear to leave her presence, and she, dear and gentle creature, seemed to forget her pain when I was near her, and never slumbered so calmly as when she knew I was seated by her side.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Every day that brought my beloved Louisa nearer to the last, betrayed some new trait of that noble heart, and that gentle spirit, which rendered the thought of leaving her still more insupportable. My habitual moodiness had produced a constraint on her part, that prevented her from revealing to me those vast treasures of the heart and mind, in which hers were so rich. Although, from the commencement of my attachment to her, I had believed her to be one of the most faultless of her sex, I little imagined the strength of her intellect, the overflowing tenderness of her heart, and the utter guilelessness of her nature. The terror occasioned by her illness, driving every other care from my mind, and bringing forth the deep, the engrossing affection she had inspired, had convinced her, that whatever might be the waywardness of my manner, or the uncertainty of my temper, I fondly, truly, loved her. This conviction had destroyed all constraint or reserve on her part, and, for the first time, I became sensible of the treasure I possessed.

She would sometimes, with the artlessness of a child, confess the awe, the dread, with which I had inspired her, often making her doubt whether I indeed loved her; or whether I had not found her too simple and inexperienced, to make a friend and companion of. How my heart reproached me while I listened to these artless revelations of her pure mind! — a mind so free from taint, that when my moodiness or inequality of humour pained her, she sought to discover some error in herself to account for it, instead of censuring me. And this was the creature I had considered a spy on my thoughts, — who I believed more

than half suspected me of madness! O! ye to whose care some young and guileless creature is confided — who has never previously left a mother's wing — who has never known aught of the world, save that which a fond mother, or a faithful preceptress has revealed — who looks up to you for all the hopes of happiness in this life, and whose heart, overflowing with tenderness, waits but to know you will value it, to pour forth its rich stream of affection on you! deal gently, — deal mercifully towards her. Do not mistake her timidity for dulness; — her sensibility for ill humour. Give her confidence in herself — in you; and when she first learns to reveal those thoughts, only previously confided to a mother or sister's ear, do not mock the first fruits of an inexperience which is one of the peculiar charms of youth. You expect only perfume from the rose, and should be satisfied if you find only innocence in youth.

Of how much happiness had I robbed myself by not duly appreciating my sweet Louisa, — by not sufficiently mastering my moodiness, to draw forth the charms of her mind! But no; it was not to be! Destiny, in blessing me with such a creature, only required that I should know how to prize the rare gift; and I, blind and selfish, could remain insensible to such merit, and believe myself wretched, while I possessed one blessing so inestimable, as to supply the place of all others, had I been wise. Now, — now that heaven was about to withdraw the gift, of which I had proved so unworthy, what would I not have given to retain it, if but even for a few fleeting months?

Never had I loved Louisa with half the fervency, the passion, the tenderness, as since I knew I must lose her; and far from the continual contemplation of this event rendering me more reconciled to it, every day, every hour brought increased agony. *She* found strength in religion. It had been early and carefully implanted in her mind — had grown with her growth, and strengthened with her strength — and now, in her hour of need,

it failed her not. It taught her to look with confidence to a meeting with those she loved, and left behind on earth, in another, purer, world; and dried her tears at the thought of a separation, which, without the hope of a re-union hereafter, would have terribly added to the bitterness of death. Alas! *my* religious education had been far less carefully attend to. My poor father, brought up a Protestant, had abandoned the faith of his fathers, to please the wife he loved almost to adoration; and she, satisfied with this proof of his attachment, was content when she saw him follow the rites of her Church, without inquiring whether a conviction of its truth had taken root in his heart.

For my mother, her religion partook of all the enthusiasm of her character and temperament. While my father, the object of her passionate love, was left her, her God was adored with all the blind idolatry of a fanatic; but when death snatched him from her, in spite of all the prayers, tears, and vows she offered up for his recovery, despair took possession of her heart. Her God became a God of terror, to be propitiated only by unceasing grief; and surrounded by all the insignia of sorrow, she passed the remainder of her life in the practice of all the austerities of the Roman Catholic creed.

Before I left her, I had shrank with instinctive dread from her gloomy oratory, and her ceaseless tears; and, unhappily for me, in after years, I found no one to implant in my mind those sacred truths, which form the only sure basis of that religion, which is at once the guide through this life, and the hope for another. I ventured not to doubt, but my belief possessed not the hearty conviction, the pious fervour, that appertains to the faith of a true Christian. Thus it was, that I lacked the strength accorded to my admirable wife, and allowed despair to fill my heart, while hers was supported by hope in the mercies of her Redeemer. Blind must I have been, when her angelic patience, and resignation, failed to bring conviction, that only from *above*

could it have been accorded her. I saw the effect, but I traced not the *cause*, and yet, never was cause more apparent.

Whether those about "to shuffle off this mortal coil" are endowed with quicker or finer perceptions than those in health, or whether affection, strong even unto death, enables them to penetrate the hearts of those dear to them, I know not; but my suffering wife became conscious that my faith wanted the earnestness of conviction that now formed her consolation. She questioned, she exhorted me to open my soul to the truth, and I listened to her, as I would to an angel, had the Almighty allowed one to descend from heaven, to remove the film of worldliness from my eyes. I embraced her faith, because it held out to me the sole refuge from despair — the prospect of meeting her in heaven.

The Vent de Bise, so often and severely felt at Nice, had disappeared, and the advent of milder weather, and occasional gleams of sunshine, had induced the physician to yield to Louisa's often repeated request, to be taken out for a little air in a wheeled-chair. This indulgence, promised for the first favourable day, had long been looked forward to with pleasure by the dear invalid, and from an early hour in the morning, when she saw the sunshine illumine the windows of her chamber, she had been impatient to go forth. I took her in my arms down stairs, placed her in the chair, supported by pillows, and walking by the side of it, bent down to catch her feeble accents.

We had only proceeded a short distance from our lodging, when we met one of the many groups of valetudinarians so often encountered at Nice. In this case, the invalid was a man, and evidently in the last stage of consumption, and a woman, so wholly occupied by him as not to appear conscious of surrounding objects, walked by the side of his chair. The two chairs met on the pavement; the occupants glanced at each other with that mingled sentiment of pity and interest awakened by the similarity of their fate, peculiar to invalids, and at the same

moment, I recognised in the poor faded shadow, propped up by pillows in the chair, my old school-fellow Neville. His wife, — for it was Mrs. Neville who walked by his side, — turned her head at this moment, and her eyes and those of my dear Louisa met. In a moment Mrs. Neville was by my wife's side, pressing her hand in hers, and speechless with emotion, trying in vain to address her, while poor Neville, reaching forth his hand, exclaimed: —

"My dear Herbert, this is no time for remembering old differences. Let us forgive, as we hope to be forgiven, and forget, if, indeed, we have either of us had any real cause for coolness, which I doubt."

I clasped his offered hand, while his warm-hearted wife said, "This, dearest, is my amiable friend, Mrs. Herbert, of whom I have so often spoken to you." And Louisa smiled, and nodded kindly to him.

"This," said Neville, "is a sad meeting, but I am glad it has taken place. I have often since my illness thought of you, Herbert, and wished that we might meet. My dear wife formed such a regard for yours, that I regretted and reproached myself for having taken her away from Torquay. It was wrong — it was unkind, but you will pardon it, will you not?"

I met Neville's kindness in the self-same spirit that prompted it. My heart had been softened and ameliorated by the state of my adored Louisa, and when I beheld him, whom I had last seen in the pride of health and manhood, reduced to his present pitiable state, my heart had no place for aught save regret and regard.

My countenance, I suppose, as well as my manner, revealed my feelings, for Neville again took my hand, and while he warmly pressed it, said, "You will come and see me, Herbert, will you not? and my wife will go and see yours."

"And your darling little girl, where is she?" inquired Mrs. Neville of Louisa.

"Here, dearest friend," replied Louisa; "and she is, thank God, in perfect health. And yours, is she here?"

"No, I left her in England with my mother, that I might devote all my time to him," and she gave a look full of tenderness to her husband.

Both invalids were drawn to the same spot, the most sheltered one in the whole vicinity of Nice, and Mrs. Neville and I walked by the chairs, conversing with their occupants. I learned from Neville, that a neglected cold, caught by sleeping in a damp bed, the very time he was coming to join his wife at Torquay, had fallen on his lungs, and defied the treatment of all the physicians he had consulted: that after unavailingly testing their skill, he had been ordered to Nice, "where they have sent me to die, Herbert," added he, dropping his voice, that his wife or mine might not hear him.

"Yes, I feel it is so, but I must submit to the will of God. But I was so happy," and his lip trembled, "that it is hard to die, to leave her, on whom my soul dotes. But you also, Herbert, you have your cares. Your poor wife, I fear, is very ill."

I shook my head, and tears rushed into my eyes, for I could not form words to tell him that I had lost all hope of saving my Louisa.

"I am so glad," said my wife, when we returned from her little drive, "that we met the Nevilles, and that you and he are reconciled. I cannot express the pleasure it has given me, dearest, for now you will not be left quite alone when I am taken from you, and our child will have one kind friend."

"Poor Neville will not be long spared to his wife," said I, anxious to turn her thoughts from herself, and unable to bear

the frequent recurrence she was in the habit of making to her own death.

"Yes," observed she, "I fear her heavy trial will soon come. He seems as near the last parting on earth as I am. But I think our being brought together seems like something providential to both parties, and this interposition of the Almighty's goodness, if I may be permitted so to consider it, ought to be received with gratitude, and not slighted."

She made me visit Neville that evening, and he insisted on his wife going to sit with mine, while I remained with him. Our lodgings were luckily very near each other, and by this arrangement, the invalids were never left without society.

Neville, always frank, nobleminded, and kind-hearted, had lost none of the qualities that had rendered him the most popular boy when at school, and the most esteemed man at college. But, in addition to these qualities, he had acquired others in the school of affliction, to which he had lately been subjected, that were calculated to endear him more than ever to those who had opportunities of knowing him. He had more charity, more forbearance towards others than formerly, and severely censured himself for not having sought to correct the errors in me, which had induced him to think ill of me, instead of casting me from him, and resisting those advances on my part, towards a renewal of intimacy, which proved that I was disposed to like him.

"The truth is, my dear Herbert," would he say, "I was vain of my foolish popularity, and although I felt drawn towards you, your reserve, your pride, and shall I confess it, your assumption of worldly wisdom at an age when according to my notion it was a very poor substitute for generosity and good fellowship, had turned all our companions against you, and I swam with the stream, instead of honestly telling you why you made enemies, and giving you a chance of righting yourself.

Then it was both wrong and unfeeling of me to break off the friendship that had sprung up between our wives, by carrying off mine so abruptly. It inflicted pain on her, and must have hurt the feelings of Mrs. Herbert. I had no right to do this on no other grounds than that you had been less popular at school and at college than myself, and I assure you, Herbert, I have often of late regretted it."

At such moments I have exposed my whole heart to this generous friend, keeping the one fatal secret alone concealed. Even that sometimes trembled on my lips, but I had not courage to reveal it. The shock might be too much for his weak state, and what right had I to agitate, to distress him. My conscience told me that if I was a victim to one single impulse, indulged with no guilty intent, but which had led to the death of the object, I had no right to enchain to my destiny the sister of that object, between whom and myself her death ought to have interposed an insurmountable barrier. No, I dared not hazard the loss of his friendship so lately proved, so dearly valued, so soon to be closed by death, by the avowal of my terrible secret! But I told him all the circumstances of my childhood, the perversion of my better nature by the cynical counsel and example of Mr. Trevyllan, the pride that checked the avowal of my errors, and prevented my vindicating myself, or at least openly resenting the avoidance of my companions. He comprehended, he pitied me, severely blamed himself for not having sooner understood me, and shielded me under the Ægis of his popularity and power over his companions.

Poor Neville! Never did a kinder, warmer heart beat in a human breast than his! It was no wonder that his wife adored him, for he possessed every quality to conciliate affection and command respect! She was no longer the gay, sprightly creature I had seen her at Torquay. Subdued to pensiveness, her high spirits fled with her husband's health, and pale and care-worn,

she looked as if fifteen years had been added to her age. Her frequent visits were a great comfort to my dear Louisa, and in the confidential intercourse established between them, a promise was asked, and given, that through life Mrs. Neville would prove a friend to my daughter, nay more, a protectress, should death deprive her of a father.

When I looked on my wife and on Neville, two beings so rich in every estimable quality, fast sinking into their premature graves, I have thought that if the Almighty would yield a prolongation of their lives to our prayers, existence would be henceforth to us who loved, who almost idolized them, a boon, a blessing, to command our eternal gratitude. But, alas! this blessing was not for us! The fiat had gone forth, and prayers and tears were unavailing to stay the terrible stroke impending over our heads.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THERE is something peculiarly touching in witnessing the triumph of virtue, combined, as great virtue invariably is, with superior intellect, in the last stages of life. The patience, the resignation, the thought for others, outliving every selfish feeling.

Thus was it with my beloved wife, and with my dear friend. My soul, long darkened by error, and overshadowed by one memory so harassing as to render life a scene of gloom and trial, instead of a blessing, seemed to be illumined by the glorious light that now broke in on it from those two admirable creatures, who, like setting suns, give forth the brightest light when about to vanish from our view. How pure, how ennobling, were the thoughts uttered by their lips, lips that were alas! soon to be sealed by death, and how eagerly, even in the midst of my grief, did my ears drink in the wisdom which emanated from minds already freed from the soil and influence of earthly passions. I seemed, all unworthy as I was, to hold communion with angels, and my grosser nature became purified by the contact with them.

"You must unlearn the worldly wisdom acquired under the tuition of Mr. Trevyllan," would Neville say to me, "before you can be able to make friends, or to appreciate them. Suspicion, though it may sometimes preserve a man from being duped, erects a barrier between him and his fellow men that for ever excludes sympathy and friendship; and far better is it to suffer some inconvenience from misplaced confidence, than to shut up one's heart from the genial influence of good will. Think well of

mankind *en masse*, even though *en detail* you may find some unworthy specimens of the genus, for good thoughts beget a healthy mind, whereas evil ones, and suspicion is ever evil, corrodes the mind that once receives it as a guest. A suspicious man is never a truly wise one, just as a superstitious man is never a truly religious one. To have lived some years with so admirable a woman as your wife, Herbert, ought to have vanquished the error grafted on your character by your unfortunate intimacy with your guardian."

I dared not tell Neville that my suspicions had sometimes lighted on the all-faultless creature with whom he believed a contact would suffice to banish them for ever. No! I restrained my tongue, though Heaven knows how contrite a spirit reigned in my heart, as I remembered the humiliating fact.

And now the attending physician prepared us for the fast approaching death of Neville; and the agony of his poor wife was as intense as if she had not been several months inured to the terrible certainty that she must lose him. She left his side no more, and twice, every day, did my dear Louisa insist on my going to them. Oh! God of mercy, pardon me, if, when writhing in agony with my own grief, and when I beheld that young pair, also tortured by their coming separation, I dared to question thy goodness, for not vouchsafing to spare *his* life in pity to the poor creature who doted on him, and for not granting me that of my adored Louisa.

"Let my remains be interred in the English cemetery here," said, poor Neville to his wife, in my presence, a few hours before he breathed his last.

"My friend Herbert will see the last duties paid, and relieve you, dearest, from the painful details consequent on such situations. Return to England, my beloved, as soon as your presence can no longer be a solace to the wife of my poor friend, and ever continue to be to him as a sister."

Even up to the last hour, his thoughts were turned to the good of others, his noble nature maintaining its influence over a frame reduced to a shadow by pain and disease.

He retained his senses to within a few minutes of his death; pressed my hand and bade me farewell; blessed his absent child; and holding the hand of his wife within his, while he murmured prayers and blessings on her head, resigned his soul to the Almighty, and expired without a groan.

Never did I witness grief like that of the bereaved widow; for now that the restraint which the dread of afflicting him had imposed, was removed, her sorrow mastered her reason for many hours. She could not for some time believe that he was indeed dead, and addressed to the ears, now sealed for ever, the passionate words of endearment that had been wont to fill them with delight. But when she fouud that all was over, that the husband who had never ceased to be the lover, whose lips, had never uttered a harsh word to her, and the tones of whose voice were still ringing in her ear, was gone for ever, her despair was so wild, that I trembled lest she should destroy herself.

I left her to the care of the physician, and with a heart almost broken, returned from the dead — to the dying.

"Your poor friend is released, is he not?" said my wife, as I entered her chamber. "I saw it by your countenance the instant you came in. Ah! my poor Mary, how my heart bleeds for her! Come near me, dearest. You are ill, worn down. But God will repay you for your kindness to your departed friend."

She pressed her transparent fingers to my brow, and kissed my cheek, but the burning heat of her hands and lips betrayed the fever that was consuming her, and made me tremble.

"I have been thinking, dearest," said she, "that if your poor friend's remains are to be resigned to earth here, I should like to have mine interred near them. In a strange land it seems

less desolate to be buried near some one dear to those most dear to me. Promise me this shall be as I wish."

Her lips quivered, and her voice became tremulous with emotion; and I, losing all self-command, my feelings having been so excited by the death-bed I had left, and the dying one by which I stood, groaned aloud, and fell insensible on her bed. Her silver hand-bell soon brought her maid into the room, but it was not for many minutes that their united efforts could restore suspended animation to my frame.

"Oh! my God, do not forsake him," exclaimed she fervently; "but grant him resignation to bow to THY will, and to live for the child it pleased thee to grant us. Oh! this grief of his disturbs my soul, and draws it back with a mighty effort from the contemplation of that world, where I hope to be reunited to him, to this vale of tears, where the thought of his sorrow, when I shall have left him, fills me with anguish."

And now that I felt aware that the hours of my adored wife's life were drawing to a close, I could not bear to absent myself even for a moment from her presence. Yet she, ever unselfish, would insist on my going to her bereaved friend, Mrs. Neville, whose sorrow awakened all her sympathy. On me devolved the painful duty of giving instructions for the funeral; but further than sparing her this chagrin, I could be of little use, for she refused to be comforted, and it was only by talking to her of her child, that I could for a moment draw her attention from the dead. There she sat, all day, silent and motionless as a statue, looking at the remains of her husband, until a burst of violent grief would break the stillness of the chamber of death, after which she would again resume her fixed gaze on that pale face, as if she expected to see some change in its marble aspect. By her desire I had a sculptor to take a cast of the face. But even while this operation was performing, she could not be persuaded to leave the room, but watched its progress with as much anxiety, as if the dead

could suffer pain from it. With her own hands she smoothed the pillow in the coffin, on which his head was to be placed, and when the corpse was laid in its last narrow bed, she left it not for a moment, until it was found absolutely necessary that the coffin should be nailed down. That scene was terrible! and the witnessing it shook my nerves so much, that I lost all power of being of use. Happily for her, a deep swoon, the effect of mental and bodily exhaustion, ensued, and for some time she lost in insensibility the consciousness of her misery.

I attended the remains of my poor friend to the grave, a solemn and melancholy ceremony which his poor wife could not be dissuaded from being present at, althoug her trembling limbs were scarcely able to support her languid frame.

When the coffin was lowered into the grave, she would have fallen to the earth, had I not sustained her fainting form. Poor bereaved woman, she felt that she was now alone, and desolate; her child, whose presence would have reminded her that she had still a tie on earth, and duties to perform, was far away; could it so not be wondered at, if, stunned and overwhelmed by the blow that had crushed her heart, she prayed for death to reunite her to *him* she had lost. I had much difficulty in getting her to leave the cemetery, when the last sod of earth was laid on the grave. She clung to the spot with passionate tenderness, for it had now become dear and sacred in her eyes, and she preferred it to all others on earth.

To return to that home where *he* was *not*, but where every object reminded her of him, would, I felt assured, be more than she could bear, and at the suggestion of my dear wife, a vacant apartment in the house in which we lodged had been prepared for the reception of her poor friend. I ordered the carriage to drive to it, and asked her whether she would not spend an hour with my Louisa. I really felt afraid to leave her alone, and yet I

could not remain longer absent from the couch of my dying wife.

"She cannot go to you," said I, "and will be comforted by seeing you."

She hesitated long, but at length consented, and we entered my wife's room. The sight of her poor friend, reduced to the last extremity of weakness, a breathing shadow she might be called, had, as I anticipated it would, a powerful effect on Mrs. Neville. She became more calm, and tears, hitherto almost denied her, flowed in abundance down her pale cheeks; as reclining in a chair by the bed-side, my dear wife holding her hand in hers, she listened to the feeble accents of her friend.

"My stay on earth must now be short," said my adored Louisa, "and it would be most kind in you to remain with me in this house to the last. With my dear friend and my husband by my dying-bed, I shall pass away to another world more calmly; do not, therefore, refuse this my last request."

"But I shall put you to such inconvenience: I am sure I shall."

"No, all has been arranged in the hope you would not refuse my wishes; a room is ready for you, and your maid is already here."

My wife, with all a woman's tact, made a point of occupying her poor friend continually, so as to leave her as little time as possible to devote to grief. She asked her to read the Bible to her twice a-day, to join her in prayer, and to give the anodynes prescribed by the physician. She would place our child in the arms of our friend, and exhort her to remember her own absent one, who would prove a blessing and a comfort to her, and thus, by employing her, interrupted the constant contemplation on her heavy affliction, that would otherwise have wholly destroyed her health, already greatly impaired by anxiety, confinement, and grief.

"Ah! my beloved friend," would Mrs. Neville say, when my dear Louisa spoke of her fast approaching end, "how I envy you who are going where my adored husband is gone, while I may live for months, ay, years separated from him."

"You forget that you are a mother, that *his* child is a sacred legacy bequeathed to you by him," would my Louisa reply; "and that when you are summoned hence, *he* will expect to know how you have fulfilled the task he assigned to you. You must live, if it be the will of *the Most High*, to perform your duties, and you must not shrink from them."

For me, the scenes I had lately witnessed, and the sight of my adored wife on her death-bed, had taken such an effect on me, that I felt as if I could not long survive her. Nor did I desire it; for with the selfishness inherent in man, and aware that with her would depart my every hope of happiness on earth, I wished for nothing so much as death to unite me to her. I forgot that I was a father, that it was my duty to struggle to live for the sake of my daughter, or if I did remember her I silenced all paternal solicitude with the conviction that Mrs. Neville would be a mother to her as she promised, and worn out by grief and anxiety, I longed to lay down the load of life, and to be laid in the grave with my beloved Louisa.

I sometimes betrayed to her this desire, but never without her severely reprehending it.

"What!" would she exclaim, "are mortals, like cowards in the field of battle, to wish to fly from their duty the moment that hope no longer cheers them? Oh! no, my dearest husband, you must not wish to leave your post while a task remains to be fulfilled, nor desire to join me, until the Almighty sees fit to summon you."

Often have I been jealous and offended by her wishing me to live after her. I thought it betokened a want of affection, for I

could not, with my selfish nature, judge her high and noble one. I felt that were *I* on the bed of death, I should rejoice to know she should soon be called to follow me; hence, I could not comprehend the difference of our sentiments on this point. Alas! it was not given to me to know her worth, until I had lost her.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THREE weeks after I followed my friend to the grave, my beloved wife resigned her gentle spirit into the hands of her Creator. Although long prepared for this heart-rending event, I found myself as unable to support it, when it arrived, as if my foreboding heart, and tortured mind, had not foreseen that it was inevitable. Her dying farewell to our child, and to me, achieved the measure of my despair, and within an hour after she had breathed her last, I was wildly raving, under the influence of a sudden attack of brain fever, from which, for several weeks, the physicians believed I could never recover. During its violence, I imagined myself dead, and believed that I beheld my lost wife, crowned with more than mortal beauty, in the regions of the blessed, holding out her arms to welcome me. Methought I approached to embrace her, when her dead sister interposed between us, and exclaimed, "Away, sinful man, thou who in life presumed to attach thy evil destiny to her sinless one; think not that here, where only the good are permitted to join those loved on earth, thou canst be reunited to her."

"Hinder him not, dearest sister," said my wife. "He loved me on earth, and I loved him, — oh! so fondly, that even in the grave he was not forgotten. He was my husband, and the commands of the Most High are, that those whom God has joined, no one may put asunder."

"Thou knewest not, my sister, that this sinful man sent me, whom thou didst love, whom thou didst mourn with such bitter tears, to an early, an unhallowed grave?"

"Oh! say not so, say not so, it cannot be."

"Yes, it was even as I say. When, fatigued by a long walk, I sank to slumber, as was sometimes my wont, on that seat where thou and I had often reposed, this man approached, and heedless that sleeping innocence is under the protection of Heaven, he dared, even on the evening of the day that saw his dead mother consigned to the grave, to steal on my slumber, and to profane my virgin brow with his lips. Terrified, I burst the bonds of sleep, and fled from him. He pursued me; I felt him gaining on my steps, his scorching breath moved my hair, and I rushed more wildly on, until my foot struck against a stone. I stumbled, tried to recover myself, and in the effort fell headlong over the steep precipice that bounds the narrow path."

"Oh God! Oh God!" exclaimed my wife; "can this be possible? And this man, the destroyer of my sister, dared to wed me, knowing in his heart that I would have preferred the most lingering, the most cruel death, to allying myself with him! And he is the father of my child, the niece of her he sent to an early grave."

I tried to speak, to call Heaven to witness that when I obeyed the impulse of a wild desire to press the brow of the sleeper, no thought of guilt entered my mind. That, when I pursued her, it was with no evil intent, but to intreat her pardon, and to reveal my name. But my tongue clove to the roof of my mouth, and not all my efforts could produce utterance.

"Oh, Almighty!" exclaimed my wife; "can this man, whose head has so often rested on my bosom, whom I loved better than I ought to have loved aught but Thee, have intentionally destroyed the life of my sister? Oh! grant him the power to vindicate himself from intentional guilt, or, if speech be denied him, oh! grant me the power to read the truth in his heart."

It seemed to me at this moment as if the veil of flesh that envelopes the soul, was rent asunder by Divine will, and that

the heart thus exposed, its secrets could be deciphered as easily as written characters when brought to the light.

"Look there, behold!" said the spirit of my departed wife, addressing that of her sister, which still interposed between us, "no crime was meditated. The unhappy man meant no evil, and severely has he suffered for the fatal indulgence of an impulse which, hadst thou not awoke, would never have wrought the fatal consequences that ensued. Have I not, in my mortal state, witnessed his wakeful hours, his troubled sleep, his days of gloomy preoccupation, and his despair, without knowing the cause? O! join me, my sister, in entreating at the throne of the Most High, pardon for him who was my husband."

"And can mortal love still exist when life is over?" said the sister. "Thou pleadest for this sinful man, as though thou still lovedst him. But thou knowest not what a tissue of deception and falsehood he wove to conceal the result of his sin, and which has so greatly aggravated it. Did he not, when he found my poor mangled body, palpitating with the last pangs of life, only wait until my heart had ceased to beat, before he drew it into a cavern at the base of the precipice where I fell? There he left my remains until it pleased him to come under covert of the night, to dig in the same cavern, a grave into which he consigned them with no minister of God to pronounce a prayer, no fond eye to drop a tear over them. Why left he not my corpse where it fell, and where it might be discovered, and restored to my distracted friends? But no; he added the pangs of suspense to their terror and grief at my mysterious disappearance, and deprived my poor remains of the rites of Christian burial, in a consecrated grave, where the tears of a fond mother and sister might sometimes fall. Nay, more, did he not, some months after, consign the corpse of a stranger to the vault where the remains of his parents then reposed, and where those of our mother now rest, passing them

for mine? And can this sacrilege be forgotten? Canst thou urge aught in his favour?"

The brow of my wife, over which a halo of light played, that gave a divine expression to her countenance, now seemed clouded by care. She bowed her head for a few minutes, as if overcome by grief, and then lifting her tearful eyes to heaven, said, "Yes, I can still urge thee to join me in imploring his pardon from the Almighty. If God could pardon those who caused *his* death, and implore forgiveness for them, from *his* Father on High, saying, 'Lord, they know not what they do;' mayest thou not follow the bright example, and entreat pardon for him who surely as we read his heart, knew not what he did, when he pressed his lips to thy brow."

"When he has expiated his sins by long suffering and repentance, perhaps I may listen to thy pleadings, my sister, and join thee in praying for his pardon; but he must undergo many trials and persecutions before this can be; and never shall he approach thy presence in heaven until, purified by long sufferings, he has effaced the stain of his sins by his tears."

And now the power of utterance seemed restored to me; for, throwing myself on my knees, I cried in bitter agony —

"Have pity, oh! have pity on me!"

At this moment I felt myself seized by powerful arms, and in defiance of all my struggles and resistance, I was lifted from the floor, and laid on my couch. I saw figures moving around my bed, heard whispering voices muttering —

"His delirium still continues. He might have been seriously hurt in thus throwing himself out of bed, and you must not take your eyes off him, even while he appears to sleep, lest he should injure himself."

"Why, he raved so strangely, Sir," said another voice, "that he really quite frightened me."

"Stuff — nonsense!" replied the first speaker; "who would

mind the wild ravings of a man in a brain fever? If I had not thought you had better nerves, I would not have recommended you as a proper person to take charge of the poor gentleman by night, now that his own servant and Mrs. Neville's are so worn out with fatigue from sitting up with him."

"I 'll take better care for the future, Sir," was the answer; "but he threw himself out of bed so suddenly, and began crying out, 'Pity, pity, — have pity on me,' so loudly, that I was quite confounded like. The poor gentleman seems to have a wonderful deal of trouble on his mind."

"Never busy yourself about his mind, that is not your business," observed the other speaker, whose voice I now recognised to be that of the doctor who had attended my poor friend Neville and my lost wife; "only attend to his person, and take care that during his delirium, he does not injure himself."

My senses were now perfectly restored, but such was the extent of my weakness, that I could hardly move. Perhaps it was this total prostration of strength that for the time being vanquished the fever of the brain, and subdued, to a certain degree, the violence of my grief for the loss of my wife; for although I remembered her death, — nay more, every word of that last farewell, which had so agonized me as to bring on the attack that had nearly killed me, I no longer felt the overwhelming grief I had previously experienced. Perhaps a strong frame is required for violent grief. Mine was reduced to such weakness that as well might I have sought to use bodily force as to endure strong mental agony. My dream was vividly remembered, so vividly that I could almost believe, that instead of a dream it had been a reality. And then came the recollection of what the man left to take care of me had said to the doctor of my strange rayings, and the great trouble that he believed pressed on my mind. What, if I had uttered all the conversations that my delirium had framed in that terrible dream, and thus had betrayed my dreadful secret

to a stranger? There was torture in the thought; and I now found, that although too exhausted for the indulgence of violent grief, I was still accessible to terror. O man! selfish to the last! thou canst outlive grief for those dearer to thee than life; thy feelings, benumbed by bodily weakness, may remain torpid to the appeals of love and memory, but let thy personal safety, or rather, let me think, thy honour and reputation, be menaced, and thou canst feel as acutely the danger as if in health.

I had not only a dread, but a secret conviction that in my ravings I had betrayed my secret, and to a stranger, too, who might be disposed to make the worst use of it for his own advantage. Drops of cold perspiration fell from my brow, wrung by terror, as I reflected on all this. What must I do to remove the impression made on this strange man by what I had uttered in my ravings? Here was selfishness and cunning still exerting their combined influence over me, although life scarcely fluttered at my heart, or kept my pulse still beating.

I stole a look at the man through an opening in the curtains, and never did I behold a worse countenance. Large shaggy eyebrows, projecting over small, deep-seated eyes, remarkable for a mingled expression of malignity and cunning. A low and narrow forehead, retreating towards the roots of the hair. A large and ill-shaped nose, — a wide and very coarse mouth, and a peculiarly short chin. He was a tall man, of a powerful and muscular form, with herculean limbs, and a very short neck, and his ears were the largest and flattest I had ever seen. No peculiarity in his appearance escaped my attention. I felt instinctively that this man, so unfavoured by Nature, might henceforth have a baleful influence over my destiny. I mentally measured his powerful frame with my own now weakened one, and acknowledged that, even in my days of health, I could not struggle with him without the certainty of defeat.

There is always a disagreeable sensation experienced in the consciousness of inferiority in physical force to other men, but when this consciousness of inferiority is felt towards one whom we may have cause to dread, in whose keeping a secret of vital importance to us may be, how much more annoying does it become! The man, while I was examining him, seemed wrapt in deep reflection. His brows were curved, his coarse lips strongly compressed, and from time to time he darted furtive glanced towards my bed.

After a pause, he shook his head, and muttered, "Yes, yes, something profitable may be made of this. I 'll bet anything that, light-headed as he may be, there 's some crime or another at bottom, in which he has been concerned, and that he lets out in his sleep, mixed up with his insane ravings. Why, he has not passed a single night since I have been called in without talking of having destroyed some woman, and of having hidden her body in a cavern. All this can't be the pure raving madness of a brain fever. No, no, there 's something in it, I 'm sure; and as he can afford to pay for my keeping his secrets, why, I 'll be hanged if I don't make him come down handsomely, — that 's all."

Though this soliloquy was uttered almost in a whisper, not a syllable of it escaped my ear, and terror took such pessession of me, that it required a strong effort of my volition to prevent the violent trembling with which I was seized from becoming visible by the movement of the bed.

A thought occurred to me to try if I could not impose on him by affecting to talk in my sleep. I breathed hard, uttered a few words, and he instantly stole to my bed-side, and bent down to listen.

"Will no one come to release me?" demanded I, keeping my eyes closely shut, and breathing hard, as if I slept. "They hurled me over a steep rock, and when I fell mortally wounded,

they dug a hole and threw my body into it, and no one will release it, though I call night and day for deliverance."

"That 's a new go, however," murmured the man; "I never heard him talk of being killed himself before. It has always been some woman who fell over the rock, and whom *he* buried in a cavern. I hope he hasn't been talking nonsense after all, and that there 's something of truth at the bottom of all his raving."

"If they would take my body out of the pit," resumed I, "I should then be taken directly to heaven."

"The devil you would," said he; "I am not quite so sure of that, though. I must find out all I can concerning him," continued he. "The nurse knows more about him than the rest, — I 'll pump her, and discover where he comes from."

CHAPTER XXX.

To listen to this designing ruffian, arranging his plan for discovering my home and past life, filled me with alarm. Yet how could I counteract his schemes? — how prevent the nurse from answering his questions? To put her on her guard would excite suspicion in her mind, that there existed some cause for concealment, and this would be dangerous.

Oh! the torture of feeling my bodily weakness to be such, that I could not turn in my bed without assistance, and to know that a villain was bent on discovering a clue to a secret, partly revealed in my ravings, but which I could die rather than have exposed. There were moments, — to such fearful crimes may terror of the discovery of guilt lead one, — heaven pardon me for the sinful thought! when, had I but the strength to carry my desire into execution, I could have strangled this wretch, while he dozed, as he sometimes did, in a chair by my bed-side, and so have secured his silence, and prevented his further researches into my past history. I thought not of the consequences that must inevitably ensue from his being found dead in my room — so wholly does the mind become blinded to the sense of one danger, in the burning, the mad desire to escape from another — or, if I did, I fancied it would be easy to account for it, by saying he had been seized by apoplexy.

"Yes! Yes!" thought I, and I clenched my teeth, and the spirit of a fiend seemed for a few minutes to have entered my heart, urging murder. "Had I but the strength, *he* should soon be silenced for ever."

I had conceived a hatred the most intense against this man,

who, without any provocation on my part, had turned eavesdropper; noting down the ravings of delirium of a fellow-creature, worn down by grief, and reduced to death's door by fever, in order to discover some secret, for the keeping of which he could enforce payment. That night's experience taught me how fortunate it sometimes is, that man has not the power to work the evil he wills; for alas! there are those so weak in principle, and so prone to act on the impulse of the moment, that crime is often only escaped, by the want of power to perpetrate it.

I was surprised to find how much the sense of my grief was dulled. I felt like one who had received some severe bodily injury, to lull the pain of which some strong anodyne had been administered; and who was fearful of even thinking of the wound, lest he should awaken the dormant agony. It is asserted by physicians, that two maladies cannot act on the human frame at the same time; and I believe a similar rule holds good with regard to the mind; for, judging by my own experience, I should say, that two strong passions cannot sway a man at once.

The terror excited in my mind by the wretch in my room had so filled and engrossed it, as to deaden, if not banish, for the time being, my sorrow for the death of my beloved wife; and yet, when my alarmed imagination pictured the danger that might result to me from the villain so bent on discovering my secret, I blessed God that *her* peace could not be disturbed by the success of the utmost extent of his malice. No, she, heaven be praised, was safe. The discovery of my guilt could bring no blush to her cheek, no pang to her heart, and gentler tears than any I had lately shed filled my eyes, as I thought of her in her peaceful grave, where I longed to repose beside her. Then came the thought of my motherless child, and my tears flowed faster. Poor innocent! my heart yearned to embrace her; but yet I must not ask to have her brought to me; I must still for a few days assume the mask of delirium, in order to deceive the spy who

was watching me, and cheat him into a belief that the words uttered by me when I slept were but the ravings of insanity. I lay tranquil and overpowered by lassitude and exhaustion, during the long and tedious days that followed my return to consciousness. My own servant generally remained in the room, but I affected not to recognize him, and pretended to doze when he looked at me.

At night the strange man took his place, and then my terror commenced, lest I should sleep, and in my slumber betray my secret. Often was I obliged to pinch my limbs, and pull my hair, to keep myself awake, while pretending to sleep, and in my simulated slumbers, uttering incoherent words to deceive the designing wretch who was carefully noticing every syllable that escaped my lips.

In proportion to my desire *not* to sleep was the drowsiness that stole over me every night, filling me with terror for its possible consequences, while during the day, when the man I feared was absent, I had little inclination to sleep.

One night, while I pretended to slumber, I saw this man take the candle in his hand, approach it close to my eyes to ascertain if I indeed slept, and then, having repeatedly passed the light before my closed lids, he searched in the drawers of the looking-glass and commode for something, leaving not a single one unopened. At length he found a bunch of keys; I heard them jingle in his hand, and with them he tried to open my writing-box. The patent lock foiled his attempts, and then, with a half-suppressed oath, he searched the drawer of the dressing-box, in which he found my watch, to the chain of which the key he sought was attached. He seized it, opened the writing-box, and began examining its contents; but, finding nothing to gratify his curiosity, or to confirm his suspicions, he muttered curses, and taking up the portrait of my beloved wife, opened and examined it. I could have killed him for the profanation. That

picture I had induced her to sit for in London, when I first began to be alarmed about her health. It was an admirable resemblance, and I would not, so highly did I value it, have confided it to the hands of any creature on earth, save to those of her friend Mrs. Neville, or her old nurse at home.

"Hoh! hoh!" muttered the wretch, "this, I suppose, was his wife, and a devilish pretty creature she must have been, if she had not such a sickly look. I don't like your whey-faced women, not I, give me a buxom wench, with roguish eyes, and rosy cheeks, that 's the girl for my money."

I cannot describe the mingled feelings of anger and disgust which I experienced, as I listened to this ruffian commenting on the portrait, and comparing it with the object of his own vulgar taste. There are some persons who inspire us with such repugnance, that we would not, could we avoid it, permit their glances to fall on any woman dear to us—but when the beloved object is no more, her memory becomes so sacred in our hearts, that we shrink from the notion of her portrait being profaned by the gaze of vulgar eyes. And there I lay inert, and powerless to avenge the insult, though almost suffocated with rage against the offender.

The wretch still held the portrait, and looked at it. "Yes," resumed he, "she must have been a pretty creature before she grew sickly. I dare say 't was his sulky temper that spoilt her health. The nurse-maid confessed to me, when I questioned her, that although he was an affectionate husband, he never was a cheerful companion to her poor mistress; but, from the beginning, was a gloomy, melancholy man. That 's what convinces me he must have committed some crime or other, that he 's always afraid will be found out. What else would make him so gloomy and unlike other men?" And now he laid down the portrait, and renewed his search in the writing-box. He found a purse with some eight or ten guineas, counted them over, and

then paused, as if hesitating whether or not he should appropriate them. Some slight noise disturbed him; he let fall the purse into the writing-box, hastily closed the lid, and approaching my bed, he stealthily examined me; but I kept my eyes closed, murmured a few words as if in sleep, and so deceived him.

"I really was startled," muttered he; "to be caught with his purse in my hand, and his writing-box open, would be an awkward job. By Jove, it was lucky for him that he did not awake and see what I was about, for if he had, there was nothing left for me to do but to place the pillow on his face with one hand, while I clutched his throat with t'other, and so made an end of him; and, when all was over, I 'd have called up the house, and sworn that he had been seized with a fit."

My blood seemed to congeal in my veins as I listened to these words, which, though pronounced in a whisper, I heard distinctly, owing to the silence that reigned in the room, and my sense of hearing, always acute, having now become more so from the abstemious regimen I had lately undergone. I shuddered at the thought of being in the power of a ruffian who, I felt convinced, would not hesitate to commit murder, if he deemed it necessary for his own ends.

"I 've half a mind to take these ten shiners for my own use," muttered he. "The chances are, the owner will never recover to claim them; and, if he should, he will forget all about 'em, so much has he suffered since he put 'em here, and so crazy has he been. But no, let 's have a care. Suspicion would fall on me; and it 's likely enough that chap, his servant, has looked into this here writing-box as well as I have; *he* knows the money was here, and would soon guess who took it. No, I 'll not take a guinea of it; I 'll resist temptation for once, and try to make my money by getting that there fellow who is sleeping so soundly into my power, instead of putting myself into his, for sake of a few paltry guineas."

So saying, he replaced the purse and its contents into the writing-box, arranged the papers in the state in which he had found them, locked the box, put back the watch in the drawer, and, having again examined to see that I slept, resumed his place by my bed-side, and I, breathing loudly, muttered incoherent ravings now and then, to which he listened attentively, occasionally exclaiming —

"Psha! stuff! he doesn't let out anything worth hearing of late, but talks a pack of nonsense."

I could no longer sustain my present painful position, so wholly worn out was I in body and mind by sleepless nights and feverish anxiety; so, the following day, after the surreptitious opening of my writing-box, I affected to awake as if from a troubled dream, and demanded to see the physician. My servant was rejoiced to find that my reason was restored; and, when the doctor came, I inquired for my child and Mrs. Neville so collectedly, as to convince him that the fever had wholly subsided, and that nothing remained to be done, but to endeavour to restore my strength by a more nutritious regimen. He promised, that when I was a little stronger, I should see my child, of whose health he gave me a most satisfactory account.

"I should be glad," said I, "to have no one to sit up at night in my room, it disturbs and prevents me from sleeping."

"You are still too weak, my dear Sir, to be left alone at night," replied the physician.

"But could not a bed be arranged for my own servant on the sofa?" demanded I.

"Certainly, if you prefer it, and I will immediately give instructions that your wish shall be carried into effect."

What a weight seemed to be removed from my mind by this arrangement. Yet, fearful that the wretch I so dreaded might again enter my chamber, I said, that I wished the man who had

sat up with me might be sent away, and remunerated for his trouble.

"Has he not satisfied you by his attention?" inquired the doctor.

"He has, I believe, behaved well enough," replied I; "but invalids are, I suppose, prone to be fanciful; and I confess I should be glad to have him sent away."

"Then he shall be dismissed at once," observed the doctor, good naturedly; "I will give him his *congé*."

A great weight was removed from my mind in the certainty that I should see this man no more; yet my conscience reproached me for not informing the doctor, who had recommended him, of his having opened my writing-box and examined its contents. A secret dread of exciting his vengeance deterred me from taking this step; and as he had actually *not* robbed me, however well disposed to do so, I excused myself for my want of moral courage in not denouncing him, by the reflection, that as he had not rendered himself amenable to the law, I might be justified in concealing his intended turpitude. I confess that it was no sentiment of humanity that checked me from informing the physician of what he had done, but simply the selfish dread of exciting his hostility to aid the cupidity that was urging him on to discover my secret, and to make it a profitable speculation.

A bed was made up for my servant in my room, and when I became assured that he was fast asleep, an assurance given in the most convincing, but least agreeable mode imaginable, namely, by his loud snoring, I experienced a sense of relief, and freedom from constraint, that was a positive comfort. *Now* I could resign myself to slumber, of which I stood so much in need, without the dread that a sordid spy was watching my pillow, and listening with interested and evil intentions to every word that might escape my lips while I slept. It was a positive luxury to feel myself secure to enjoy refreshing sleep; and the disagreeable nasal

sounds that unceasingly reminded me of this fact, however unbearable I should have considered them under different circumstances, were now considered only as proofs of my safety from *espionnage*. How deep, how unbroken were my slumbers that night!

Such was my total prostration of strength, that even imagination and memory remained quiescent, the body being too weak to nourish them, and not a dream troubled my repose. I awoke refreshed, and was glad to hear my servant still snoring as loudly as when I dropt asleep; and when I called him to procure me the sustenance which my weakened frame required, I listened with satisfaction to his humbly expressed hopes, "that his being such a heavy sleeper, and sometimes rather given to snoring, did not disturb me." He would have been doubtless surprised, had he been told that to these peculiarities so calculated to annoy an invalid, I owed the calm and refreshing sleep I had derived such benefit from.

"Well, Sir," said he, "how some persons do lie! Why, would you believe it, Sir, Figgins, the man who sat up with you at night, said, as how you kept talking in your sleep all night long, so that he could not close them for a minute, and I can declare I never heard you say a single word all the time."

I readily believed the assertion, for I must indeed have had the lungs of a Stentor, to have talked sufficiently loud to have broken the slumber of poor Thomas, who seemed to feel an increased sentiment of attachment towards me in consideration of my not having reproached him for his infirmity of snoring.

"Yes, Sir," observed he, as he opened the shutters and drew back the curtains, "Figgins must be a great story-teller, for when I wanted not to leave you, Sir, at night, when you were so poorly, he said I snored so desperately, that were I to remain in your room, you could not get a wink of sleep; and as he told

this tale to the doctor, he insisted that I should not stop in your room at night."

Well did I divine the motive of Figgins wishing to watch me at night, though experience taught me that his statement with regard to the snoring was not untrue.

"I 'm glad he 's gone, Sir," resumed Thomas, "for of all the prying, inquisitive chaps I ever met, he 's the worst. Why, he used to cross-examine me as closely as barristers do a witness in a Court of Justice, about where you came from, Sir, and every particular about you, and your family affairs; and when he found he could get nothing out of me, he began to question Mary, and I was obligated to tell her not to gratify his impudent curiosity about what did not concern him."

CHAPTER XXXI.

I FELT a secret dread as I listened to the revelations of the good and simple Thomas, for they but too well proved the determination of the artful and designing Figgins to follow up, if possible, the clue he believed he had discovered to some secret connected with my past life. How unfortunate that chance should have thrown so dangerous a man in my path, and especially, at a period above all others, when I was incapable of exercising over myself the constraint practised when free from fever. Alas! we are ever the slaves of chance when our own errors have plunged us into difficulties! Had I not a terrible secret pent up in my breast, I should have had nothing to dread from the prying disposition of Figgins, or the cupidity that led him to wish to turn it to profitable account. No, every day's experience taught me that to myself, and myself alone, I might date my misery. Every event that had entailed disquiet, had originated in my own error. Nothing aggravates the sense of misfortune more than the consciousness that it has been brought on by our own faults — If we can blame another it seems some mitigation to our chagrin; but when we know that we only have been in the wrong, our self-reproach increases our suffering.

In three days after my release from Figgins, my health had so much improved, owing to the refreshing and uninterrupted sleep I had enjoyed, that the doctor consented that I might see my child. The dear little creature was brought to me; and the sight of her black dress, and smiling face, as she recognised me, produced an effect on my feelings not to be described.

"Papa, papa," exclaimed she, holding out her little arms

to come to me, and "Mamma, mamma," followed, although the nurse made signs to her, that the words must not be repeated. The passionate grief, quelled by extreme bodily exhaustion, and by the terror awakened by the odious Figgins, now revived afresh, called into action by the sight of my daughter. A child, and more especially a young one in deep mourning, is at all times a mournful object. That a creature should be deprived of a parent, when it most requires its tender care, strikes the beholder with sadness, and the unconsciousness of the bereaved little one of its loss, and its innocent smiles, offering such a melancholy contrast to its sable habiliments, add to the sadness awakened by the contemplation. But when the child calls one father, when one knows that its mother, the most lovely and faultless of created beings, is no more, when one traces in the dear child's sweet face the likeness of her laid in a premature grave, whom one would have died to save, how keen is the agony, how bitter the grief that fills the heart. It is then that the truth of the well known lines, "I weep the more, because I weep in vain," is felt, and one turns with distaste from the world that no longer contains the object in whom our all of love and hope was centered to that lonely grave, in which rests all that was mortal of her. I almost smothered my child with my kisses, while my tears fell fast on her delicate face.

"Don't ki, papa," said she, looking fondly in my face. "Mary says, dear mamma, who is gone to heaven, will be angry if I ki, and so she will if you ki," and she wiped my eyes with a handkerchief she found on my bed, and told me to be good, and then kissed me again and again.

How much of her adored mother's gentleness and affection did I discover in her child, and with what tenderness did it fill me. Great as was my sorrow, I felt that I was no longer alone in the world. I had still something to live for, some one to

cherish. A sacred bequest had been confided to me by the angel I deplored, and I vowed that henceforth I would devote my life to discharging the duties it imposed. The artless prattle of my daughter continually turning to her lost mother, melted me to a womanly softness. The tears, hitherto denied, now flowed abundantly, and relieved me, and I blessed the innocent creature to whom I owed this relief.

The following day I was able to be moved to the sofa in the sitting-room, and it was arranged that I was to receive a visit from Mrs. Neville. The thought of this meeting shook my nerves greatly. How many recollections of other and happier days must it awaken in my mind! Our loss had been the same; but she, happily for her, had not a single sin of omission or commission towards her husband with which to reproach herself, while I was bowed down by the consciousness of having by my abstraction and moodiness caused my inestimable wife many hours of anxiety and wretchedness. How many bitter memories of instances of this now arose to wound me! How often had I noticed her heavy eyes and tear-stained cheeks when I had more than ordinarily indulged in these fits of gloom, which she felt she had not the power of charming away! And I, cold, unfeeling, and selfish, had forborne either to conquer the gloom which afflicted her, or to attempt to persuade her, that it was constitutional, depending on the state of the nerves. How the consciousness of having pained the dear departed aggravates grief, those only can comprehend who have endured this misery! The grave! the atoning grave! while it banishes every recollection of error in those over whom it has closed, if error they had, brings before us, oh! how vividly, even the trivial annoyances we have inflicted on them, now when it is too late to offer atonement. What would we not give to possess the conviction that we had never grieved, never vexed them? This conviction I fully believed would be Mrs. Neville's panacea for sorrow when time should have softened the

first sharp pangs of regret, and I envied her this consolation, which conscience told me never could be mine.

When the next day, at the appointed hour, she entered my room, I positively started with astonishment when I beheld her altered appearance. Pale as marble, and reduced almost to a shadow, she was hardly to be recognized by those who had, like me, seen her in the bloom of health and beauty. She approached the sofa on which I reclined, extended her hand, which was so icy cold as to chill mine, and tried to speak, but a tremulous movement of the lips, and a faint and indistinct sound alone followed the effort. She sank into a chair, and after a silence of many minutes, which I had not the courage to break, she at length found words.

"I have only waited for your convalescence, Mr. Herbert," said she, "to quit Nice. I could not bear to leave the husband of my dear friend, the friend of my — beloved — husband," her agitation increasing as she referred to those so dear to her, "while his life was in danger! Now that Dr. Farrington assures me you are safe, I mean to depart and join my child. If you wish to consign yours to my care, be assured I will as faithfully fulfil the duties of a mother to her as to my own."

"Thanks, thanks," replied I; "but I have not the courage to part from her. She is now all that remains to me," and here a passionate burst of grief interrupted my words.

"I thought you would be unwilling to part from her," observed Mrs. Neville; "but remember, should circumstances arise that may occasion a change in your sentiments on this point, I will be ever ready to receive her with affection, and to afford her a home with me. Here is my address in England. Let me often hear of your dear child's welfare and of your own. I offer no attempt at consolation, Mr. Herbert, to a grief like yours, for I too well know how utterly vain and useless it would be; but recollect, and the recollection will be necessary when

the bitterness of regret makes you feel that life has lost its charm, that those whose loss we must ever deplore, have confided a sacred, a solemn trust to us to fulfil — a trust for sake of which we must vanquish all selfish feelings, and consent to live. And now, farewell. May the Almighty grant you resignation to *his* will, and may you find in your dear child a consolation and a blessing."

She once more extended her hand to me, and quitted the room, leaving me overpowered by contending emotions, but grateful that I might count on a true friend to my child, while life was spared to this amiable and exemplary woman.

The next day she left Nice, after having gravely exhorted the nurse on the subject of my daughter, promising to be ever a friend to her if she carefully discharged her duty to her charge. And now once more, all ties between the world and me seemed broken. In losing sight of Mrs. Neville I stood alone with my motherless child, the world before me where to choose my path, no one offering a less gloomy prospect than another. I no longer lived in the actual — the present. My thoughts were all with the past, in that past which at the time appeared, Heaven knows! anything but happy, but which now regarded through the mist of bitter tears, and the sadness of memory seemed bright as a rainbow in a troubled sky. But the rainbow itself, if analyzed, is it not found to be composed of the tears of the sky? Such is past happiness, only bright when reflected on from a distance. How I could be otherwise than blest while my adored Louisa was lent to me on earth, I could not in my present misery imagine. Her presence, her affection, ought to have been a solace under every affliction; and I must have been the most ungrateful of mortals; nay, more, positively mad, not to have felt it to be so. Yet I was conscious that even while I possessed this inestimable treasure, there were hours, days, and months in which I was most wretched; while now, could she but be restored to me, every

other ill in life would appear light, and I would abandon my whole heart to the happiness of calling her mine. Oh, God! why is it that we know not the value of the blessings thou hast vouchsafed to lend us, until we have lost them for ever, and the consciousness of our ingratitude for them is added to our sorrow? I now wondered how I had outlived the blow that had destroyed my peace. I must surely have a harder heart than most men to bear up against it; and I almost despised myself for this insensibility. I resigned myself without a struggle to the grief that every day increased, rather than diminished. It seemed an infidelity and ingratitude to the memory of my beloved wife to forget her even for an hour; and I sought to feed this morbid sorrow by continually gazing on her portrait, and recalling proofs of her tenderness and devotion the most calculated to keep alive regret. Well has the great Italian poet Dante written —

> "Nessun maggior dolore
> Che recondarsi del tempo felice."

Alas! I now experienced the truth of these lines as I pondered with an agonized heart on past happiness.

When my child was brought to me every day, I used to gaze on her sweet face, tracing the resemblance to her sainted mother, and listening to her innocent questions. She would chide me when my tears could not be controlled — tell me it was naughty to cry — and then kiss me, and say I must be good.

I found, that the affection a father feels for his child while its mother lived, is very different to that which he experiences when she is no more, for the love and sorrow for the dead mingles with the tenderness for the living, and gives it a stronger character. Pity also adds its weight, reminding us of the deprivation that has fallen on the dear little creature, in the loss of a mother, a loss that never can be replaced — for we know, that no step-mother, should we ever be disposed to give our daughter one, could supply that inexhaustible well of affection to be found only in the

maternal breast. A sense of duty, and a kindness of heart, may, and sometimes does prompt a conscientious discharge of the duties of a step-mother, but how different, how cold is this duty, in comparison with the undying anxiety and love of a real mother. And as I made these reflections, I vowed, that even if time should calm my regret, although I believed this to be impossible, that never should the place of my lost Louisa be filled either in my house, or heart, that never should her child have a step-mother.

A melancholy task was now before me, but I feared it not, for it was congenial to my feelings. It was, to open different boxes that had belonged to my wife, and to transfer their contents to others, in order to diminish the vast quantity of luggage that had been deemed necessary for her comfort, and that had accumulated during our travels, and to send all that was not required for our use to England.

To perform this task, I had to enter the chamber in which my adored wife had breathed her last, and which had been left precisely in the same state as when she inhabited it. There was the bed on which she had last reposed—the pillow on which her head had last rested. It still bore the impression, and many and bitter were the tears that fell on it as I pressed my lips to the place.

The odour of violets still pervaded the chamber, and all things in it. It was the favourite perfume of my Louisa, the only one she used, and her dresses and handkerchiefs were impregnated with it. This delicate odour, so strongly associated in my mind with her, so fondly loved, so deeply mourned, stole over my senses, awakening agony, and long and bitterly did I weep, before I recovered sufficient calmness to resume the task that had brought me to the room.

There was the chamber, just as she had left it, every thing speaking to me of her, but where, oh! where was she? Alas!

that fair form, that lovely face, on which my eyes had so often gazed with delight, were withering in the cold grave, and her, for whom I had thought this chamber not half good enough, was now shut in a narrow coffin! "Fool, fool," thought I, "it is but the mortal coil, the earthly envelope of the bright soul, that is confided to the grave. That clay, over which thou wouldst still drop thy burning tears, would be as insensible to them, as is the dust with which it will soon mingle. The spirit, the immortal soul that animated it, is with its Creator in heaven; and let that be thy consolation. Wouldst thou, ever selfish, ever pining for thine own comfort, presume to wish her, who is now with her Almighty Father, freed from all care, and enjoying the reward of a life of virtue, back on earth, to suffer again the ills to which all of human kind are heirs?"

I tried to think I could not be so selfish, but, alas! the leaven of that human taint still fermented in my heart; and could wishes and prayers have recalled her to life, with all its trials, she would have once more become a denizen of earth, and her happiness above would be immolated to mine below. Who that has idolized a creature as I did my Louisa, can, during the first pangs of grief, learn to think of her as an unembodied spirit in the unknown realms of bliss! Those realms which imagination can never realize, and in the attempt to contemplate which the mind becomes dazzled — bewildered! When one dear to us departs on a journey to some far distant clime, where we have never been, how is our regret increased by the vastness of the distance, and our ignorance of the region! We seek every source whence we can derive information of it, and as we become acquainted with its nature, customs, and habits, we feel more reconciled, because we can, in some sort, realize the image of our beloved one in the scenes we have been studying. But when the King of Terrors snatches her from us, to that world, at the portal of which (the grave) we must leave her, that shadowy region, of

which we know nothing but that which religion teaches, of which we can learn nothing, though we search every volume ever written by man, of which no traveller who has journeyed there has ever been permitted to return to tell us of it. — Oh! then do we feel the bitterness of grief: nor can the hope, the faith, that the spirit whose departure has steeped our life in gloom, is in heaven, conquer the selfishness, the anguish of regret!

If departed souls were permitted to revisit this earth, to hover near us, to give some sign that we were remembered, even in the regions of the blessed, what a consolation would it be? But this is denied. The Almighty, for *his* own allwise purposes, has not thought fit to grant this boon for which every bereaved and sorrowing heart has longed, and prayed in vain during the first months of the sharp agony of grief.

CHAPTER XXXII.

I OPENED the wardrobe containing the clothes of my wife. The *robes de chambre* that had last enveloped her fragile form, were the first articles that met my view. "Oh, God!" cried I, "that these delicate fabrics can still retain their freshness, when she for whom they were made, who so lately wore them, is mouldering in the grave! Are we not like shadows that flit through life a brief span, to go hence and be no more seen? Life is all unstable! We know not when we shall be called away; we cannot count on a single day of existence."

This conviction, however alarming it ought to be to the erring, is, nevertheless, the greatest consolation to the mourner, and fondly does he cling to it. Death is the only certainty on earth. Every thing else is fleeting, but *that* is sure; and as we contemplate the habiliments of the departed, the objects that appertained to them, the letters they wrote, the books they read, we feel as in an unreal and shadowy world, on a river ever flowing to the sea of eternity, where our frail bark can cast no anchor, and whence the next wave may bear it off for ever. I almost doubted my own existence, so absorbed was I in the contemplation of death, or, if reminded of it, it was only by the pangs of grief.

How many times were the dresses of my departed wife pressed to my lips, and bathed in the tears that fell on them! How many tender recollections did they evoke! What appeals to the heart did they make! "No never," exclaimed I, "shall these robes be worn by another, save by her child. They shall be kept until she becomes old enough to use them, and I will often look at them, to keep alive in my breast the image of her who wore them, fresh as it now is."

And could my treacherous memory, or faithless heart, require such mementos to keep alive that image? I was angered with myself as this thought occurred; but such is man. Even in the midst of sorrow he has a presentiment, that unless death should soon summon him away, a day may come, when the anguish he is enduring will soften into a gentler feeling, become a pensive sentiment, and that the sight of such mementos may be necessary to revive fond memories of the past. He has seen others live on when robbed of all that made life dear. He has seen the deepest mourners come back to the busy world, after a year or two has elapsed, since they fled from it in agony. He has seen smiles return to the lips whence he believed they were for ever banished, and pleasure sparkle in the eyes where it had been drowned by tears. He learns to know the frailty of man, and the brevity of grief, by having witnessed the conduct of others, and in anticipating the possibility of similar results in himself, he loathes his own nature.

Having filled the trunks with the contents of the wardrobe, performing the operation with as light a hand, as if the dresses could feel a rough touch, I proceeded to open the writing-box of my lost Louisa. A little *sachet*, filled with her favourite odour of violets, was at the top, and beneath it was her blotting-book. My hand trembled when I drew it forth and opened its pages, amid which I found the well-remembered diary of her poor sister, and one also kept by herself, which I had never previously seen, or suspected the existence of. The first leaf contained the following notes. —

How my heart throbbed and ached as I perused them! And yet I hesitated whether I should read on. I doubted whether I had a right to make myself acquainted with her secret thoughts. I feared I might find passages that would aggravate my chagrin, and I was already so wretched, so hopeless, that coward-like, I

shrank from any increase of woe. But then came the reflection, that nothing could increase my sorrow, so deep, so overwhelming did I feel it to be at that moment, and although I suspected that jealousy and selfishness sharpened the edge of my curiosity, I nevertheless read on.

"I have seen *him*, and though his long and severe illness has left him pale, emaciated, and helpless as an infant, I was greatly struck with his appearance. Perhaps the impression was heightened by these very circumstances, for nothing appeals more to the heart than these silent indications of suffering, and in a man, too, who is less liable to them than woman. — His face is very expressive, and to my taste, very handsome; yet there sometimes steals over it a cloud of sorrow and anxiety, which proves his thoughts are not with the present. This is but natural in his position; the loss of such a mother as his must be deeply felt, and I who knew and loved her so truly, can well sympathise in his regret. He must possess great sensibility, for my mother has told me that the interest he took in our terrible afflictions, was as warm and profound as if he had known that angelic being, whose loss we must ever deplore. He constantly raved of her during his delirium, and even wept her loss. This alone, were he even plain instead of being attractive, would make me" — (here a line was drawn through the word love) "esteem him" was substituted.

"I have seen him again — he improves greatly on acquaintance. His languor, his low spirits, and his frequent abstraction, increase my interest for him. One who thus deeply mourns a mother, must have a tender heart, for I have heard that in that busy world whence he has come, such deprivations are soon forgotten. Yet how can such afflictions be effaced from the heart, before time, the consoler, has healed the wound. Alas! do I not experience the truth of this? — Do I not every hour, nay, every minute, feel that mine is a grief that will ever endure, although it may be softened."

"There is nothing that awakens attachment, I do believe, so strongly as sympathy in sorrow. Well has Schiller said: —

'The tie that binds the happy may be dear,
But that which links the unfortunate is tenderness unutterable.'

I don't think, handsome and clever as I consider Mr. Herbert to be, that he would have made such a deep impression on me had we not been stricken by grief. Perhaps my dear mother's constant commendations of him, — her having repeated to me his raving of my dear sister, joined to my affection and gratitude to his excellent parent, have aided to increase the sentiment. I must not, however, allow myself to like him too well. But have I now the power to check this too strong preference? I fear not; and *I* blush as I record the unmaidenly fact of liking one who has not owned a passion, — nay more, who may never feel one for me. But pity for his languid state opened my heart to a stronger feeling. And yet there is an inexpressible softness in his eyes when they meet mine, and an earnestness in his manner when he addresses me, that lead me to think I am not indifferent to him. But, perhaps, all men — that is to say, young men — assume these indescribable looks and manner when they address young women. I know so little of the world, how should it be otherwise? having always lived in such total seclusion, that what I take as indications of a preference for me, may be only the general mode adopted by men towards the youthful of my sex. I have never known — never even seen — another young man, except the artist who made a sketch of my adored sister, and his manner was deferential, and nothing more. How I wish I knew whether Mr. Herbert's attention to me is more than mere politeness would dictate, or simply gratitude for my mother's and my attention.

"There is a melancholy expression in his eyes when he gazes on me that goes to my heart. How I should like to dispel *His*

grief, — though heaven knows my own still lives with all its pangs and regrets. Perhaps it is the intensity of it that has so softened my heart, as to have rendered it more susceptible of affection. How often do I question myself how I can live on, — how I can permit another object to replace in my breast that dear, dear sister, who, till lately, wholly filled it? It may be that Heaven, in mercy, has decreed that this new, this engrossing affection, should occur to save me from despair! Who shall circumscribe the pity, the goodness of God! And if without *His* will, even a sparrow cannot fall, — may not I, a human being, however frail and erring, hope that His commiseration and mercy descends to me. If *He* has willed that my adored sister, the half, the *better* half, of myself, should be snatched from me, her fate shrouded in a mystery, that adds all the pangs of suspense to horror and grief, — may *He* not have vouchsafed to grant this new sentiment to preserve me from — madness? There have been moments when my brain throbbed with such agony; and such a sense of despair came over me that I trembled for my reason. And could it be otherwise? Who could bear to think that a creature dearer than life itself should suddenly disappear, leaving no trace behind — no clue to lead to a discovery of her fate? Oh God! oh God! is not here cause for despair — for madness? Had she died in my arms; had I closed those dear eyes, every glance of which is so fondly remembered; had I seen her laid in her silent grave, every duty to the loved dead faithfully, tenderly fulfilled; and could I daily visit it, and drop my tears over the spot, it would be a comparative happiness. I should then know that her dear remains were safe from insult, that her spirit was with God. But this terrible mystery, this fearful suspense, — oh, it is heart-breaking! If thou art still an inhabitant of earth, oh, most beloved sister, how bitter must be the grief which thou art condemned to endure, for thy compelled separation from us, and the agony

thou knowest it must inflict on us. — I can write no more, my tears fall so fast that they blind me."

"We found him better to-day. The pallor of sickness is giving place to a faint tinge of red in his cheeks. His voice, too, is less weak and tremulous. Yet, he is unwilling to admit this improvement. Is it that he fears his admission to convalescence would no longer offer a motive for our visits? Yes, it must be so; and may I not receive this little *ruse* on his part as a proof that our presence is a source of pleasure to him. How ingenious I am in finding food for hope! Heaven grant I may not deceive myself — and yet may not he derive comfort from having his solitude broken by the friends of his dear mother, unable as he still is to leave home? Who possesses such power to soothe and console in sickness and sorrow, as my mother? — and may not this power in her make him most desirous for a continuance of her visits, without any reference to mine? It is most probably so; and I, vain and simple, have fancied what I hoped. I feel more sad and dispirited than of late; such is ever the result of indulging false hopes."

"Yes, he is certainly making daily advances to convalescence. He looked much better to-day. I used to think that much of the beauty of his face might be attributed to its paleness and pensive expression; yet now that these gradually disappear, I begin to think he appears to even greater advantage. — How strange it is that I should know, or rather feel, that he is looking at me, when I dare not lift my eyes to his face. — This frequently occurs. Can I be wrong in thinking that these fond glances, — the softened tone of his voice when he speaks to me, must mean something more than mere ordinary attention. Oh no, he does, he must love me!"

"Heaven be praised, my fears, my doubts are over. He loves me, and we are affianced! How much can a few short hours accomplish! How much of joy, and alas, of sorrow too,

can be crowded into them! I accompanied my dear mother yesterday as usual, to visit him, determined to examine more closely than ever whether or not I was deceiving myself into a belief of his affection. He looked so much better in health that my mother, thinking our daily visits no longer necessary, confessed to him, that her increasing weakness warned her that the exertion was too much. And I, ungrateful and selfish, had not remarked the change in her aspect, had not noticed the fatigue which these daily walks had occasioned.

"As the avowal fell from her tremulous lips, I gaced on her face, and noted with a sharp pang of the heart, how pale, how care-worn it had grown. I arose, and bursting into a passionate fit of tears, pressed her in my arms, forgetful of all but that I might lose her. Then it was that he avowed his love for me, and entreated that she would accept him for a son. Oh, the mingled feelings of joy and sorrow of that moment! He spoke better than man ever spoke before. He was all tenderness to me, and dutiful devotion to my mother. She consented to our union, and blessed us; and it was agreed that he should henceforth come daily to our house. He insisted on walking back with us, and proved he was quite equal to the exertion; nay more, acknowledged that he had tried to conceal his recovery, lest we should discontinue our visits, or think his too frequent ones importunate. Why should joy and grief follow so closely on the steps of each other? Tears streamed down my cheeks, and my frame trembled like the leaves of the aspen, as I listened to the fondest vows that ever escaped the lips of man. Such a deep sense of content thrilled my soul, and agitated my frame, that I thought I should have fainted. Oh! my sister, why art thou not here, that I might weep tears of joy and thankfulness on thy bosom, that I might whisper in thine ear, how for long and weary days, and sleepless nights, my hopes have been dashed to the earth by torturing doubts. But now there is

an end of doubt, he has asked for my hand, I feel my happiness poisoned by thy absence, and by the uncertainty of thy fate.

"I have learned to distinguish his step from that of all others, and to know his knock at the door. Nay more, to *feel* when he is approaching, before I can see him. Strange prescience of love, how mysterious art thou!

"Now that my attention has been drawn to my dear mother's declining health, I find myself frequently examining her face with an extreme anxiety. — Yes, she has grown very thin, and very pale, and her eyes have lost their bright expression of intelligence — Oh, God of mercy, deprive me not of her too; in pity leave me my mother!"

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"My whole being seems changed within the last two days — I am no longer the same person since I have known that he loves me, that our destinies are to be henceforth inseparable until death! That surely is one of the most trying hours in woman's life, when the man she has long loved in secret, authorizes her affection, by the avowal of his own! He told me he had loved me from the first, and had only been withheld from declaring his passion, by the sorrow in which both of us were plunged. How I approve this delicacy on his part. My dear mother is pleased, though not surprised, at the proposal for my hand. She feels all a mother's tenderness for him, for her attachment to his parent disposed her to like him, and the deep sympathy he evinced in our affliction, rivetted the chain of affection. He too, entertains a sincere regard and respect for her, which is testified by his dutiful attention."

"His visits are now those of an affianced husband. He comes early and stays late, and yet time flies so rapidly when he is here, that the hours seem to have wings. His fits of gloom and abstraction are much less frequent, and he is occasionally even gay; but gaiety is not natural to him. No, his is a thoughtful mind, a melancholy temperament, and this it was that attracted me towards him. I am sure I never could have loved a lively man, one who could make me laugh. Such a one may be a very amusing companion; but could not, according to my notions, excite a deep attachment. Women are born to love but once, and although they may sometimes be mistaken, and fancy that a real passion, which is but a preference, that subsides when the

object is better known, I feel by my own experience, that the deep emotion, the all-engrossing sentiment of love can never be twice felt, and that the peculiarities of the beloved, though not attractive to others, become so to her who loves. I would not have my betrothed changed in aught, except that I should like to see his occasional moodiness dispelled, by happiness to be derived from my affection and devotion. Grant me, oh God! but the power to render his life a scene of peace and content, and I shall be the happiest of women.

"What a solemn trust is the happiness of a man we love, when he confides it to our care! With what a firm resolution to guard it religiously, should we accept the responsibility, and with what a deep sense of gratitude to the Almigthy, should we kneel and thank Him that we, by no merit of our own, but by His mercy, are endowed with the power of preserving it.

"They are unjust who say that love is a selfish passion — I am sure it is not so with women, at least, not with the good of our sex. We live in another, *His* well-being is far dearer to us than our own, and I believe that there are few of us who would not sooner resign the beloved to another, whom we thought could confer happiness on him, than retain him after the discovery that *we* could not bestow it. Who could bear to behold the beloved unhappy, with the heart-breaking, withering consciousness, that she possessed not the power to soothe, to cheer him? Heaven preserve me from ever feeling this — it would be the only misery I could not endure.

"Still no tidings of my adored sister; although rewards have been offered for intelligence — Oh! this terrible suspense. Never do I press my pillow without a shudder at the thought of where her dear head may now rest. We avoid speaking of her, for it excites such agony in us all, but she is constantly in our thoughts — my dear mother and I, are not more overpowered

by any reference to her, than is my betrothed husband, and this sympathy in our grief, for one he never saw, increases my tenderness tenfold. I often wish he had seen, had known her; yet, had this been the case, could he have loved me, who am so inferior to her."

How often during the perusal of this artless journal, did my tears fall on it, and how bitterly did my conscience reproach me for my own unworthiness of the treasure I once possessed. To be so loved, and by one so pure, so admirable, was indeed a blessing I did not merit, a blessing I was not capable of duly appreciating, until I trembled in anticipation of its loss, and was smitten by the realization of my worst fears — I groaned in agony — I called on her to take pity on me, as if my prayers could be granted, until overcome by my grief and remorse, I sank powerless on the couch on which I had thrown myself. How vividly arose her lovely image before me, such as she was when she had written the early portion of that journal! How well did I remember the suffusion of her fair and delicate cheeks, when I entered her mother's dwelling of a morning; the mild radiance of her eyes as they met my impassioned glance! And had I not found her all that my warmest, fondest imagination, had ever pictured? Had not the excellence of her nature, the noble simplicity and guilelessness of her mind, fully equalled the matchless charms of her person? And this creature with more of heaven, oh! how infinitely more, than of earth in her composition, had been mine, had loved me as only the unerring, and the excellent deserve to be loved, and yet while thus blessed, I could, forgetful of the treasure I possessed, give way to gloom, to moodiness, and embitter her life; my more, abridge it, by my conduct.

An irresistible impulse led me to take up the journal again, although every line of it planted a dagger in my heart. Well was she avenged by the tortures I now endured, for every

pain I had ever inflicted on her; and I experienced a melancholy satisfaction in my own sufferings in the vain belief that they might be accepted as an expiation for my wrongs to her.

How long, how intimately may we live with a being most dear to us, without being acquainted with the thoughts that are every day, every hour, passing through her mind. A look, a word, may chill the confidence that was springing to her lips, inspiring a dread of not being unterstood, or of not meeting sympathy. And then she poured out in secret the overflowing measure of her heart on paper, carefully concealing what ought, ay, and what would have been poured into the enraptured ears of a husband, who had not ceased to be a lover, had he not permitted the foul fiend, moodiness, to scare away the confidence of love. I must have been mad to have so acted, but now, too late, reason had resumed her empire over my brain, and tortured memory, lashing me like the fabled furies, allowed me no rest.

Again I resumed the perusal of the journal, though certain it could only bring me increase of woe.

"All is settled, and in a few days I am to be his. Oh! the happiness of belonging wholly, of being entirely dependent on the husband of one's choice. 'To love, honour, and obey!' How easy seems the fulfilment of this solemn engagement! I would not for all the wealth of Eastern climes wed a man whom I could not conscientiously swear before the altar of God to love, honour, and obey — Even should his commands be sometimes opposed to my own wishes, would it not be still sweet to sacrifice them to his. Would it not be a new proof of love, and duty, although he may never discover that inclination was opposed to it; and who, that has a heart filled with tenderness, but must rejoice in every opportunity of expending a portion of its wealth on the beloved? I feel that the utmost indulgence of my own wishes could never afford me half the

gratification that must ensue from yielding them to his. It is with this conviction that I will pledge my faith to him at the altar, that I will through life make the study of his happiness the object of my life."

"My future husband has arranged that my mother is to leave her home and partake ours; and this has been done with a delicacy, a kindness, that enhances the favour he has conferred on me. This arrangement was proposed the day he owned his love, but had it been less frequently, less warmly, less affectionately urged, it might not have been accepted by my dear mother. It has given the finishing touch to my happiness, and has, if possible, increased my love to my betrothed. May heaven enable me to repay him for all this goodness, this attention and forethought to my comfort. Often did the notion of my poor mother in her solitary home, when I should have left her, present itself to my mind, before she consented to live with us; and it formed the sole sombre shade in my anticipated happiness, but a timidity I could not vanquish, checked my naming my wishes; now my betrothed has removed this shade, and left me nothing to desire. How is every blessing, every good, enhanced by its being derived from the person dearest to us in life! Great blessings seem greater, and even trivial ones assume an importance from the medium through which they are vouchsafed. I feel such gratitude towards my future husband, that ingratitude, a crime that always appeared peculiarly odious in my eyes, now seems doubly so, and is the sin I should feel least disposed to pardon."

"How wonderful is the influence of love on the heart that truly feels the passion! Mine is so filled with a desire that all of human kind should experience a similar blessing, and with pity for those deprived of it, that though never uncharitable, I am more than ever disposed to sympathize with my fellow creatures. Surely a spark from the divinity is granted to us when love enters

our hearts, when it can thus fill them with charity and commiseration. This belief soothes and comforts me, for I could not bear to think that love was a selfish passion.

"Why is it that there must ever be some drawback in happiness? Is it that poor mortals are not formed for so great a blessing, without alloy, that they are unworthy of it? — Yes, it must be so; and we should accept with humble gratitude that portion which it has pleased the Almighty to accord us, instead of ungratefully murmuring that our share has not been so great as our vanity and presumption may have led us to expect. The alloy to my happiness springs from the occasional gloom I notice in my betrothed. And yet, may not this gloom be accounted for by the loss of his mother, scarcely six months dead, and who died ere he could receive her parting blessing. My grief for that sad event, and, alas! for even a still more terrible one, has been so soothed, that I, perhaps unreasonably, expect that as *his* love has been my consolation under such heavy affliction, *mine* ought to have become his."

"He is making great alterations and improvements in his house for our reception. He need not have gone to such expense as I fear he has incurred, for I should have been well satisfied with an humble home with him. He has asked me many questions not only about my peculiar tastes, but also about those of my dear mother, that they may be taken into consideration in the furnishing arrangements. His attention to my mother is quite touching, and is one of the most gratifying proofs of his affection for me.

"This has been a melancholy day, and my spirits droop sadly. To leave the home my dear lost sister shared with us, in every part of which we can identify her with past days of happiness, is a new trial, though I leave this home for that of my beloved. In that dwelling I, fortunately, can also call up her

dear image to occupy the places she was wont to fill in it, when she lived —

"When she lived — Oh! God, and does she no longer live? must I abandon all hope of ever again beholding her on earth? Ah! yes, it must be so; I can no longer cheat myself with a hope, that every day proves fallacious. Were she snatched away by aught save death, some tidings must have reached us of her. She could not so long have been kept concealed! Never do I look on the river without a shudder, for some secret presentiment tells me, that in its bed she may have found a grave! I remember how in the twilight hour she was wont to wander along the path near the edge of the rock. If in that uncertain light, and absorbed as I have often seen her, she approached too near the precipice, and fell over it into the water, she may have been swept away by the current far from the reach of those employed to search for her! Oh Heaven! to think of that lovely face, those flowing tresses, that delicate form exposed to such a fate: my brain grows dizzy, my temples throb, and my heart aches with agony, as I dwell on it. Oh! for a Lethean draught to drown these terrible thoughts; yet no, ever beloved sister, I would not, if I could, forget thee.

"To-morrow, I am to be his, and am to leave this house. I have been to her chamber, have packed up her clothes, books, and papers. Oh the pain of the task! But I dared not let my dear mother perform it. How vividly did the sight of all these things bring her image before me! Of how many incidents did they remind me. To think that these habiliments should still retain their pristine freshness, while she who wore them is — but no, I dare not trust myself to finish the sentence.

"In her desk I found a book, in which she had occasionally noted down her thoughts. It is now all that remains of her. Strange! I find on perusing this little journal that she had a sort of mysterious instinct that her fate was to be in some way or

other connected with my future husband. — I felt myself grow cold, and a shudder pass over me, as I read the passage. — But now that I have reflected on it, may it not have been that she had a prescience that he might love either herself or me, and in either case would he not have been connected with her destiny? Yes, this must be the signification of the passage.

"I have wept many tears over her little journal. She felt a foreboding of an early death. Her abstraction, her occasional sadness, and her lively tenderness for my dear mother and me, was kept alive by this presentiment. Dear, blessed sister! I thought I had loved thee, fondly, dearly, before thou wert snatched from us, but I knew not until now how unutterably dear thou wert to my heart.

"He has gone home, and for the last time alone. To-morrow, we are to be united, never more to be separated until death. — He came all joy, in the anticipation of to-morrow, and found me with eyes swollen from weeping, and spirits subdued beyond my power of concealing my chagrin. He seemed pained, and hurt, as well as surprised at my sad face and deep emotion; and to account for it I permitted him to read the cause. It greatly moved him. He changed colour several times as he perused the pages, and his hand really trembled when he read aloud her presentiment that he was to be connected with her fate. How I love him for this deep, this womanly sensibility. He fell into frequent musings during the day, and though no less tender, was thoughtful and pensive up to the moment of our parting."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"'Let no man say hereafter, this shall be a day of happiness,' says the proverb, and never did I feel the wisdom of the warning so deeply as now. This, that was to have been a day of happiness, how is it changed! Oh! may the wretchedness of my nuptial day, not prove an omen of that which is to follow it. But I must not give way to superstitious forebodings. Heaven knows, that 'sufficient unto the day, is the evil thereof.' This morning I pledged my faith to him at the altar, and was welcomed. — Oh how fondly welcomed, to be the mistress of his home! From the moment that I entered it, fresh and most pleasurable surprises met me at every step, all due to his forethought and ever watchful affection. The house is a little paradise, so embellished, so filled with all that can gratify the eye, and contribute to comfort, that the first glance given to it would prove that a fond, a tasteful, a generous lover, had presided over its arrangements, to receive the mistress of his heart. Unused to aught, save simple comfort, the elegance of every thing around surprised me. In every room fresh surprise and pleasure awaited me, but most of all in those appropriated to my dear mother's use. Nothing that could contribute to her ease and comfort, has been omitted, and tears of gratitude started to my eyes, when I beheld how gratified she was by these proofs of my husband's filial thoughtfulness and affection. I heard her, when she thought she was unobserved, murmur a prayer for his happiness, and I felt I never loved her so fondly as at that moment. We went from room to room, wondering, and admiring, and I thought that were my lost, my beloved sister, but with us, never was human felicity

greater than mine would be. Yes, I thought of her, as I ever do when aught occurs to give me pleasure. It is so natural to wish her to share it. But six months of sorrow — oh! that grief should so soon become consoled — had accustomed, though not reconciled me to her loss, and latterly I have learned, such is poor human nature, to look forward to happiness without *her*, who once formed its chief ingredient. But terribly have I been punished for my obliviousness! A couple or so of happy hours had only glided by, they seemed but minutes, when a man rode hurriedly to the gate. I saw him first, and my heart instantly foreboded some coming shock, although it divined not what. My happiness seemed too great for any addition, and the happy must ever tremble for the stability of their bliss. This man brought the intelligence that *her* remains, the remains of my adored sister, had been found in the river! And this on my wedding-day! The messenger, a vulgar and brutal man, entered into details relative to the state of the dear remains, that caused my flesh to creep, and filled me with a sickening horror, never to be described. Oh God! Oh God! to think of that lovely being defiled by — I cannot finish the sentence, it is too, too terrible. This unfeeling man made coarse allusions about my marriage, that cut me to the very soul. Oh! why did I consent to marry until the remains of my dear Frances had been found, and consigned to a consecrated grave? It was wrong, it was indelicate! But yet, my dear mother advised, nay, pressed my marriage. She said it would make her mind more easy to know I had secured a protector, that it would make her less fearful to die. But this man's coarse allusions have shocked, have alarmed my conscience, and I now wish I had postponed these ill-omened nuptials, until at least a year had elapsed since we lost my beloved sister. It was too soon to think of happiness! They who only count months since the date of an affliction, and behold the mourners with their tears

wiped away, and smiles once more returning to the lips, know not, cannot know, the hours of sorrow from the first wild and frantic outbreak of it, to the different stages when tears relieve the heart. And then comes memory, calling up vividly images, that again make them gush forth in agony, and imagination lends her aid to prolong anguish, by painting happiness that might have been ours, had death not dashed it to the ground. All these stages the mourner must pass through. But who sees them? True sorrow is ever shy of exposing its depths to casual observers, and only in privacy gives way to its anguish. How often, after a short respite from grief, passed in the society of those dear to us does its pangs return in the solitude of night, to reproach us for having, even for a brief hour, forgotten our dead!

"Perhaps we ought to have evinced more satisfaction at the finding of the dear remains of my sister, than we did; and so we should have done, had the messenger who came to announce it arrived on any other day. But we had wound up our feelings to a high pitch, and the unexpected change from happiness to renewed grief, was too sudden, too terrible, to meet us prepared to bear it as we ought. When the first overwhelming shock was somewhat softened down, it was decided that my husband was to accompany our old nurse to Pendine, where the loved remains are resting. She will, it is hoped, be able to identify them, which my dear husband could not. He set out with her almost immediately, to see that all due respect be shown, and to accompany the funeral here.

"Oh! what an evening have I passed! Compelled to stifle my own grief, in order to endeavour to soothe that of my mother. All around seems changed. These rooms, that charmed me in the morning, look gloomy and funereal now; *he* is gone, and the severe wound inflicted by my dear sister's death, has opened afresh, and bleeds more than ever. What a terrible trial for

him, too! The night wind seems to have a portentous and an unearthy sound. The birds of night mingle their wild cries with it, as they hover near my window; and as I gaze around, my eyes dread to encounter some shadowy object, so fearfully excited are my overstrained nerves. Ah! can it be, that I should dread to behold thy blest shade, my sister! *I*, who have so often, within the last six months, prayed in the silence of night, that it might be accorded me to behold thee, even if but for a minute! But oh! the fearful difference between what my imagination pictured, and the terrible reality! Hadst thou gone down to the grave in all thy virginal and unprofaned beauty, thy shade would have been associated in my mind with that living loveliness, I so well — so fondly remember.

"But now — after six months exposure to the deforming, the defacing influence of the turbid waters, in which thou hast lain, and by a contact with the inhabitants therein that dwell, — imagination, terrified by the fearful images that present themselves, invoked by the terrible details of the messenger, turns in horror away, to shut out the appalling sight; and affrighted reason trembles lest it should be overthrown. Thou, who wast so fair — so pure — my sister; why wast thou not doomed to a milder fate? Why? — But let me not impiously question the decrees of Providence!

"How like a troubled dream does the latter part of the past day appear! A day that opened so brightly! And *he*, my beloved, — my husband, — what a task he has to fulfil! How shall I ever reward him sufficiently for what he is undergoing for my sake! May heaven grant him health and courage to fulfil it! I will pray to the Almighty — to that throne of mercy, whence only consolation can be derived in such trials. —"

"I am more calm. Oh! the soothing influence of prayer! I have prayed for my husband for the first time; and, as I pro-

nounced the word husband, a blessed ray of consolation seemed to enter my soul. No! I cannot be quite wretched while *he* is spared to me.

"A letter has just reached me, from him. How thoughtful of him to write. Strange! that this, the first letter he ever wrote me, should be on so sad, — so grievous a subject, — a subject that precluded all expression of love, or reference to the position in which we stand to each other. I love him the more for this delicacy to my grief. Few men would, I believe, be capable of such forbearance. — To-morrow I shall see him again, to part no more. The funeral will take place, and he will accompany it. We shall meet in the church, — in the church, where her dear remains will be laid!"

"In the church to-day I met the living and the dead — both so inexpressibly dear to my heart. The house of God was filled with our neighbours — come to offer the last mark of respect to the honoured dead. There was not a dry eye in the church. Yesterday, the same humble friends witnessed a different scene. They attended my marriage: some strewed flowers on our path, — all blessed us! — What may not a day bring forth! The coffin, borne by neighbours, was followed by my husband. Oh! how death-like was the paleness of his face. I thought — but it might only be fancy — that he rather avoided, than sought my mother's glance and mine. And I, although a shudder passed over my frame at finding myself so near that dear corpse I had so often prayed to see, but never more may behold, and that my heart seemed to die within me, — yet could not resist turning to him in this solemn hour of trial, for consolation to bear it. What a touching ceremony is the burial one! How faints the heart when the earth rattles on the coffin of one dearer than life! Oh! my sister, when last we parted, who could have believed we were to meet no more on earth? That the coffin that

contains thy dear remains, was all of thee I should ever again behold! Oh! that dark and dreary vault, where thou art laid! But there, also, sleeps her who so fondly loved thee, — thy early, thy constant friend, — the mother of my husband; and there, too, will those who will never forget thee, be likewise laid! Now, alas! all suspense is over. We know where thy remains rest; we can weep over the spot!

"The sad, sad ceremony over, my husband joined us. How cold and trembling was his hand, when it pressed mine. We none of us could speak, and were almost blinded by our tears. — He and I supported my dear mother to our home; but he made no vain attempt to offer consolation. — He evinced the deepest sympathy in our sorrow; and, had he known her whom we mourn, he could not betray more regret. The wound that had become nearly healed, now bleeds afresh; and I feel as if I had only now lost my sister.

"Our good nurse says he is an angel, and that his grief for the dead, and his kindness to her cannot be described. My dear mother was melted greatly by this account, and again blessed him solemnly. He has brought us a long lock of her hair — that beautiful hair of which I was so proud. Strange to say, it exhibits no mark of deterioration from its long exposure to the water, but is fine and silken as ever. Even this is a consolation, and takes off from the horror I experienced, when imagination pictured her, after the details of the man who found her. The treasures of the East would not tempt me to part from this ringlet. My dear mother, too, values it beyond all price, and has bathed it with her tears.

"My husband conducted me to my chamber to-night, imprinted a kiss on my brow, and betook himself to the dressing-room that adjoins it, in which there is a small bed. How this delicacy and consideration for my feelings touches me, and endears him

still more to my heart! — I can hear him every time he moves in the next room, and I feel a confidence, a relief, in knowing he is so near me. — He speaks. — He seems to suffer. — Shall I awake him? — No, I have not courage to enter his room. His dreams are probably haunted by the painful events of the last two days. Heaven bless and comfort him! He little knows, that unable to sleep, I am noting down my thoughts as an occupation, a melancholy one though it be, through the dreary hours of this long night. — He breathes more calmly now, and has ceased to rave. Dear, precious love, may nought henceforth disturb his slumbers, and may the consciousness of a painful duty, so tenderly, so admirably fulfilled towards the living and the dead, procure him calm and refreshing sleep. — I, too, will seek my pillow. —"

"I arose early this morning, and was dressed before my husband was awake. *My husband!* there is something sweet and comforting in the very sound of these two words. They assure me that I have a tender friend, a sure protector for life!

"What a holy institution is marriage! By it, two destinies are mingled in one; two human beings, frail and weak as mortals ever are, acquire support and strength in mutual reliance. The woman, the weaker, feels confident in the protection of her husband, whose arm will shield her through existence, from those dangers which beset the path of her who stands alone, and the man knows, that he has secured a fond companion, a sympathizing friend, a tender nurse, should sickness overtake him — one, in short, who will share his cares as well as his pleasures. Yes, marriage is a blessed institution! Grant me, O! God, the grace never to violate a single one of the sacred duties it imposes."

"He came to me the moment he was dressed, and pressed me fondly in his arms. I wept on his breast, for my feelings

were touched by his tenderness, and I thought of *her* who was yesterday laid in the grave; whose fate, alas! was so different from mine. Oh! why was a similar happiness to mine not reserved for her, for *her* who so well merited every blessing! He seemed to comprehend the cause of my tears, wiped them gently away, and whispered —

"'May I never bring a tear to these dear eyes; and may I have the power to console you, my sweet Louisa, for all the chagrin endured during the last months.'

"We descended to the breakfast-room; he placed me at the head of the table; my dear mother having had a sleepless night, was now slumbering; and thus our first morning repast was partaken *tête-à-tête*. Every little incident gave him pleasure. The pouring out his tea, the seasoning it to his taste, called forth expressions of affection and gratitude; and we both felt that a *tête-à-tête* breakfast is a most delightful thing, even though sorrow has banished joy. Then came good Mrs. Burnet to receive orders for dinner, and she looked so pleased to see me at the head of the table, that my dear husband told her *she* must still be housekeeper, as he intended to occupy my time so much as to leave me none for managing household concerns. Then followed his consultation about what I best liked for dinner. He remembered what he had seen me prefer at my old home, and also our dear mother's favourite dishes. How thoughtful, how kind! — Then I would insist on having *his*, and a little contest ensued, which ended by his saying that I should have it all my own way, and good Mrs. Burnet went away smiling, as if she thought us both children. How puerile seem all these little details, and yet what happiness did they not confer on me while passing? But do not puerile details occupy a great portion of existence, and may not the spirit which presides over them greatly tend to infuse happiness, — or, — the reverse. What is,

what can be trifling that elicits or proves affection? My dear mother will breakfast in her room, and I must go to see that her morning-meal does not go away untasted. He has made me promise to ask admission for him to go and wish her good-morrow."

CHAPTER XXXV.

"Of all the modes taken by a man of sensibility to prove his affection for the woman he loves, there is none that so perfectly convinces her of it, as his attention and kindness to those dear to her. I feel the truth of this when I see the thousand different little marks of assiduity to add to her comforts, and gratify her tastes, which my husband shows to our dear mother. There is a respectful tenderness in his attention to her, that fills me with satisfaction, and greatly touches her feelings. I should be miserable if my husband betrayed indifference to my mother, or only treated her with mere politeness. Why is it, that in the midst of so many causes for happiness, I am often low-spirited, or rather, I should say, why do I frequently detect symptoms of gloom in him on whom my happiness depends? I tremble for his health, for I observe in him a certain susceptibiliy of nerves, so unusual even in women, as to justify my fears, that he is far from well. — He admitted the other day that he had been attacked by spasms of the heart, and the dread of a return of them, has haunted me ever since. I was greatly vexed with myself lately, when overcome by my foolish, but uncontrollable terror of mice, I saw one run along the room, and, like a silly child, I screamed aloud and rushed away. He echoed my cry, and turning pale as marble, seemed ready to faint, and it was sometime before he recovered the shock. What watchful tenderness, what doting love! But I must be on my guard not to startle or alarm him henceforth."

"Must we ever tremble for the health of those dear to us? My dear mother's state gives me great uneasiness, and when I betray

it, she tells me that she feels she must soon leave me. Even my dear husband, ever so desirous to give me comfort, holds out no hope of her restoration to health. Dear, dear mother, and must I lose thee? Can no healing art bring back health, no filial tenderness, and untiring devotion prolong thy precious life? I cannot fix my eyes on that dear pallid face, without tears starting into them, at the notion that it may soon be hidden from my gaze for ever.

"The physician whom my husband summoned from Pendine, said that the case was hopeless. A total breaking up of the system, as he termed it, occasioned, I am sure, by the loss of my beloved sister. The lowness of my spirits on account of my dear mother's declining state, has such an effect on those of my husband, that I feel the absolute necessity of assuming a cheerfulness, which, alas! is foreign to my heart. He too is deeply affected about her, and watches over her with as much care and tenderness as I do. Oh! what a blessing was accorded me, when heaven, in mercy, vouchsafed to unite my destiny with his!"

"I have been ill for some weeks, which is peculiarly unfortunate, for I have no time to devote to my own ailments, all being engrossed by those dearer to me, oh! how infinitely dearer than self.—I have endeavoured to conceal my illness, but it has not escaped the observation of my dear mother, and husband, in whom it has excited great uneasiness.—I know not what can be the matter with me, the sensation, and sufferings I experience are so totally different from any I have hitherto known.—Perhaps they are produced by my anxiety about my dear mother, which increases every day. I must lie down, I feel so faint."

"The cause of my long indisposition has been explained to me by my dear mother, and has filled me with joy. I too am to be a mother,—am to have a creature to love, and who will love me as I have been loved by my parent, and as I love her! What

a gushing tenderness pervades my heart at the thought, and oh! how vast a capacity for affection is the heart endowed with, when, after bestowing so large a portion on the two dear beings who already occupy it, there still remains enough to dispense to the dear creature with whom God is to bless me.

"My mother is greatly pleased, and took occasion to explain to me that this new tie enjoined a self-control over my anxiety for her, and a resignation to her approaching departure, positively essential to the health, nay, probably to the very existence of my child. Heaven grant me courage to bear all trials; but oh! how hard is the task, to *conceal* anxiety like mine—how impossible to vanquish it.

"Every day betrays an increased debility in my dear mother, and I can no longer cheat myself into the hope that her life can be prolonged beyond a few brief weeks, perhaps—days. Her mind retains all its firmness, and she is perfectly resigned to die.—Would to God that I could contemplate the impending blow with the same courage."

"It is now some months since I have opened my little Diary! How much has since occurred, fraught with the deepest interest to me.—I have become, alas! an orphan, and a mother. One of the dearest bonds that bind us to life, that between a mother and her child, has been rent asunder, and a new one, no less endearing has been granted me, the last event following the first three weeks after.—I may not, must not touch on the sad details of her last hours, and the heavy affliction that followed, lest such reflections should prove injurious to my infant, whom I nurse. This dear creature has awakened unutterable emotions in my heart, and taught me that a sweet fountain of love lay hidden there, to gush forth when I heard its first cry. How mysterious, how wonderful is nature, and what blessings has it in store for those who open their hearts to receive them!

"To feel one's infant pressed to one's breast, its dear soft

lips imbibing sustenance from the maternal fount, its sweet eyes occasionally turned on its mother's face, and its delicate little dimpled hand resting on her bosom, gives a happiness so intense, that tears of joy and gratitude fill her eyes, and a deep sentiment of religion pervades her heart. What delight to watch over the dear creature while it slumbers, and to mark the heavenly smile that so often plays over its half-open lips.

"At such moments, I feel assured that the legend, which tells that in their sleep infants hold converse with angels, is true. What mother gazing on her slumbering child could doubt it? Would that the sleep of my dear husband was as calm and refreshing as that of our child. But alas! this is far from being the case; his startings, and wild ravings often terrify me. His dreams are haunted either by a terror of falling down precipices, or else the sad catastrophe which caused my dear sister's death seems acted over again, and before his eyes, for he calls aloud to her to stop, and turn from the dangerous path.—He betrays evident marks of annoyance, when he thinks I have heard these incoherent ravings. He knows they alarm me for his health, and consequently he would wish to conceal them from me. Dear, good, unselfish being, ever thinking of others, and neglecting self."

"My husband must be very ill, although he strenuously denies it to me.—He passes whole hours without sleep, and when over-tired nature finds relief in slumber, he starts from our couch, shudders, and raves of falling down precipices, or of witnessing some one else do so.—Then his days are passed in silence, and sadness. A faint and sickly smile now become so rare as to be remarked, repays my solicitude and unceasing efforts to cheer him.—Yes, he must be seriously ill; how else can his moodiness be accounted for?—Can it be that he has ceased to love me? No, my own heart tells me that this is impossible, for love like mine must keep alive his affection. Or, is it possible

that I have lost the power I formerly possessed of making him happy? Nothing cheers, nothing amuses him; and I begin to fear that his melancholy is infectious; I feel such a disquietude and gloom creep over me, after I have been for hours unsuccessfully endeavouring to win him from the long and moody fits of abstraction into which he is so prone to fall.—If I know my own heart, I think I can be sure that no puerile sentiment of wounded vanity on discovering that, with all my devoted affection, I do not, cannot, render him happy, actuates me, or produces the deep chagrin I experience.—No, so wholly free from the taint of vanity, or selfishness, is my love, that I would submit to any suffering could I but see him happy.

"There are moments when I catch his eye fixed on me with an expression of suspicion and distrust that wounds my very soul! What can be the meaning of all these symptoms of estrangement and misery? Oh! that I should live to see them! I have several times prayed him to let me consult a physician; but he refuses, and dislikes my touching on the subject. Teach me, oh! God, to discover in what I have failed in my ardent efforts to render him happy, and endow me with the power to win him back to peace and happiness.

"I have been reflecting on the possible cause of the gloom into which my beloved husband has fallen, and carefully examining my own conduct in order to discover by what sin of omission or commission I have erred. The result is, that I think the afflictions that have fallen so heavily on us have impaired his health, and that the monotony of our existence here, by offering no interruption to divert him from his melancholy, has allowed it to take such hold of him, that he succumbs to its influence.

"For me, who have ever been used to a life of unbroken seclusion, this monotonous mode of existence has many charms; but for him who has been accustomed to other scenes, to the excitement of a brilliant capital, with its various pleasures, this

lonely place must be dull and joyless. I, too, am deficient in that animation and those colloquial powers, acquired by an intercourse with the busy world, and a knowledge of society, which so greatly assist to beguile the weary hours, and to dispel *ennui*. I must force my spirits to amuse him, and conquer the timidity that often checks my efforts from the fear of their not being crowned with success, when I would give worlds to ensure it. Buoyed up by his affection, into a false estimate of myself, I dreamt not that a day would come when it would no longer be in my power to amuse, to interest him; — that my want of talent would become so evident to him, that he would feel how much he had at first overated me. That woman who 'makes to-morrow cheerful as to day,' in a seclusion like ours must possess many qualifications in which I, alas! am wholly deficient; and this consciousness of my own demerit serves to increase my timidity, and impose a constraint on my endeavours to please.

"He has consented to see a physician, and has taken the medicines prescribed for him, yet no relief has been derived from them. Could he be persuaded to leave this, and for a time to enter into the busy scenes of life, perhaps this despondency, this *tedium vitæ* might be conquered. I will use my utmost endeavours to accomplish this point, on which my hopes now solely rest. — How many pangs have I endured before the conviction of my own utter want of power to enliven, or contribute to his restoration to health, became impressed on my mind! Oh! could I but behold him restored to his wonted state ere the Demon of *ennui* introduced by ill health, had taken possession of him, I might again know peace. Happiness I never more can know, now that I am aware that his depends not on me.

"I had the portrait of my dear departed sister removed from my dear mother's room to our general sitting one, and, strange to say, this annoyed him. He was not angry, he never is; for,

notwithstanding his moodiness, he never gives way to ill-humour; but I could see that although he yielded to my request to allow it to remain where I had placed it, he would have preferred not having it there; and I would now have it removed were it not that I fear offending him, after having so strongly pleaded for its remaining. I often catch him with his eyes fixed on the portrait — his face so pale, and its expression so sad, as to bring tears into mine. Is it that the sight of the picture brings before him the fearful contrast the face of the dead offered when he beheld it? That sight was too dreadful! it shook his nerves so terribly that he has never been well or happy since. I thought, when I became his, it was impossible that my love for him could increase; but I knew not, until I had seen him ill and desponding, how sickness and sorrow draws the heart of a wife more closely, more fondly to her husband.

"It is unfortunate, that having but two walks in our neighbourhood, he dislikes both. The one leads to the alcove, so constantly resorted to by my dear sister and myself, the other, to the church-yard, where the remains of those so dear to us rest. This last walk makes us both melancholy; but he dislikes the other even more, and is ever more nervous when we are there. I suppose, he thinks it was near the alcove that the fatal misfortune occurred, for the path-way is there very narrow, and the precipice most steep. He turns pale as marble when he looks at the precipice, and there is a wildness in his glance that alarms me. How great must his sensibility be! when I who *knew*, who doted on my sister feel her loss less acutely than he does, who never beheld her until in her coffin.

"There are some natures so susceptible, so highly sensitive, that a deep and painful shock cannot for years be banished from the mind. *His* is one of these, and although his own happiness, and, consequently mine, is impaired by it, I cannot help loving

and valuing him the more for this peculiarity, which my dear mother often told me was rarely to be found in men. I find myself often watching over him as a doting mother does over her child when it first attempts to walk alone, such is the extent of my tenderness for him."

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